

8

TWELVE
SERMONS

Preach'd at the

LECTURE

FOUNDED

By ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

CONCERNING

The Possibility, Necessity and Certainty of Divine Revelation.

The Second Edition.

To which are added,

Three SERMONS,

- I. Of Scripture being a Rule: Preach'd at a Meeting of the CLERGY in *Lewes in Suffex*. Not before Printed.
- II. Of Justification, reprinted: Preach'd at a Meeting of the CLERGY at *Chichester*.
- III. Of a Propitiation: Preach'd before the Late KING in the *Passion-Week*. Not before Printed.

Williams R
By the Right Reverend,
JOHN Lord Bishop of CHICHESTER.

LONDON, Printed for R. Chiswell, J. Nicholson,
J. Sprint, A. Bell, and B. Lintott. 1708.

TWELVE
SERMONS

LECTURE

By ROBERT BOYLE, Esq.
CONCERNING
The Possibility, Necessity and Cer-
tainity of a Future Revolution.

Three SERMONS

I. Of the Nature and Extent of a Future Revolution.
II. Of the Causes and Effects of a Future Revolution.
III. Of the Means and Methods of a Future Revolution.
Lectured by the Author of the *Discourse of the*
Reasons and Necessity of a Future Revolution.



By the Author of the *Discourse of the*
Reasons and Necessity of a Future Revolution.

LONDON: Printed by A. MILLAR, in Pall-mall.

THE CONTENTS.

- Sermon I. *The Possibility, Expediency and Necessity of Divine Revelation.* p. I
- II. *The Certainty of Divine Revelation.* p. 36
- III. *The Characters of Divine Revelation.* p. 81
- IV. *The Scriptures have upon them the Characters of Divine Revelation.* p. 111
- V. *The Argument prosecuted.* p. 141
- VI. *The same Argument.* p. 174
- VII. *The several Ways of Revelation.* p. 209
- VIII. *The Perfection of Evangelical Revelation.* p. 243
- IX. *The same Argument prosecuted.* p. 273
- X. *The Scripture Rule of Faith.* p. 307 *John 5.39*
- XI. *The Perspicuity of Scripture, and Rules for the Interpretation of it.* p. 336 *Acts 17. 11, 12*
- XII. *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* p. 368 *Luke 16. 31*

Ser.

The CONTENTS.

<i>1 Thes 2. 13</i>	Sermon I. <i>Scripture a Rule for our Direction in Matters of Doctrine, Worship, Conscience, Comfort and Salvation.</i>	p. 401
<i>Rom 5. 1</i>	II. <i>Of Justification by Faith.</i>	p. 433
<i>2 Cor 5. 21</i>	III. <i>Christ a Sacrifice and Propitiation.</i>	p. 465

ERRATA.

Pag. 99. l. 13. d. *is*, p. 107. l. 24. after *Times* d.,
 p. 117. l. 28. after *Achilles* d., p. 125. l. 27. after
all place, and after *this* d., p. 147. Marg. r. 2 Pet. 2. 1.
 p. 154. l. 10. r. *Being is to a depraved being what—* p. 165.
 l. 27. r. *as well as*. p. 173. l. 4. r. *Ath.* 13. 1. p. 192.
 r. 2 Cor. 1. 13. p. 261. l. 16. d. *which was*. p. 315. l. 9.
 after *is* d., p. 415. l. 7. r. *veram*. p. 419. l. 8. r. *Cana*.
 p. 427. l. 2. r. *opposing*. p. 428. after *Lusts* r. *in*. p. 428.
 l. *ult.* that *we*. p. 429. l. 30. f. *Israel* r. *Truth*. p. 468.
 r. *Ezek.* 43. 22, 23. p. 469. l. 21. r. 5. 9. l. *ult.* r. *our*.
 p. 473. l. 7. d. *his*. p. 477. l. 17. d. *Mich. Matt.* p. 479.
 l. 25. r. *foreclosed*. p. 480. l. 28. after *reconciling place*,
 p. 481. l. 22. f. 12. r. 32. l. 25. and *that Rom.*

*The Possibility, Expediency, and
Necessity of Divine Revelation.*

THE FIRST
SERMON

AT
Mr. Boyle's Lecture

Preach'd at
St. Martins in the Fields,
January 7. 169 $\frac{4}{5}$.

The Possibility, Expediency, and
Necessity of Divine Revelation.

THE FIRST
SERMON

AT
Mr. Boyle's Lecture

Preach'd at

St. Martin in the Fields,

January 7. 1697.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

T H E R E are Two Ways by which Mankind may attain to the Knowledge of Divine Things; namely, Natural or Supernatural.

Natural, is what we have springing up with our Faculties, or what we attain by Natural Means, by Sight, Observation and Experience, by Tradition (which is the History of others Knowledge and Experience); and lastly, by Reason and Argument, deducing Effects from their proper Causes, or finding out the Cause by its Effects: As for Instance; Thus we come to the Knowledge of God by observing the Frame of the World, by

~
 Sermon
 I.

the Series, Order, and Course of Things, which could never be without some Cause to produce them, and that Cause no less than One infinitely Powerful and Wise. Thus we argue, That there is a Soul in Man distinct from the Body, and surviving a Separation from it; forasmuch as there are such Operations as are not Competent to Matter; and that there is such a Desire of Immortality placed in Mankind, as would make the Flower and Choicest Part of the Visible Creation the most Miserable, if there was no Capacity in the Soul for such a State, or no such State for a Soul capable of it.

Such Inferences as these, are as natural to a Reasonable Mind, as those Observations are which we make from the Reports of Sense; and are therefore deservedly accounted Branches of Natural Religion.

Now this kind of Knowledge is more or less evident, is stronger or weaker, according to the Capacities and Dispositions of Mankind, and according to the Opportunities and Means they have of Information. And therefore a Philosopher that sets himself to enquire

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

5

enquire into the Myſteries of Nature, and to obſerve the Curioſity, Order and Beauty of its Fabrick, may, in Reason, be ſuppos'd to be more confirm'd in the Belief of a God, and more dispos'd to Serve and Adore him, than he that is ignorant ; as he that underſtands Painting or Carving, can more obſerve and applaud the Ingenuity and Skill of the Artiſt, than he that is unacquainted with it.

Sermon
I.

But after all, ſo much is the Subject above our Reach, and ſo dark and intricate are all our Reasonings upon it, that the Sageſt Philoſopher, in the Conclusion, is left as unſatisfied as the meaneſt Peaſant ; and perhaps more unſatisfied with his Knowledge, and the deep and unfathomable Abyſs he ſees before him, than the other is with his Ignorance ; ſo far making good what *Solomon* obſerves, *He that increaſeth Knowledge, increaſeth Sorrow.* Eccleſ. i. 18.

So that there needs ſome brighter Light than that of Nature, to conduct us to Happineſs, and bring us to a compleat and entire Satisfaction ; and that is a Supernatural Knowledge, a Knowledge that is not to be obtained

6 *The Possibility, Expediency, and*

Sermon
I.

by the ways aforesaid, by Enquiry and Observation, but by Inspiration and Revelation from Almighty God.

And this is the Subject of the Text.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

In which Words we have,

1. A Description given of Revelation; 'tis *God's speaking to the Fathers, &c.* that is, it is God's delivering his Mind to Mankind by Persons chosen for that purpose, and peculiarly fitted for it by Inspiration. Such were the Prophets *in time past*, and the Son *in the last days*.

2. The Certainty of it; it is by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake, &c.* The Apostle takes this for granted, as having been sufficiently proved, and so needs no farther Confirmation. So it was in *times past*, when *God spake by the Prophets*; and so it was in *the last days* in the Revelation of the Gospel, *which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was, faith our Apostle, confirm'd unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them*
witness

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Chap. 2, 3, 4. 7.
Sermon
I.

And therefore as *Moses* did not think himself obliged at the entrance into his Divine Work, to prove there is a God, and that God made the World, when there is such an inbred Knowledge of a Deity implanted in Human Nature, and such clear and undoubted Evidences of it throughout the Universe; but supposes and asserts it, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth, &c.* So after such manifest Proofs of the Divine Authority of both the Prophetical and Evangelical Revelation, the Apostle would not so much as suppose any doubt in the Minds of those he wrote to; but begins his Epistle with a certain Majesty becoming an Inspired Author, *God who at sundry times, &c.*

3. The Order observed in delivering that Revelation, it was at *sundry times, and in divers manners.*

At sundry times, πολυμερῶς, or in several parts; which may refer either to the several Ages and Periods, viz. The Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Prophetical; or to the several Manifesta-

Sermon
I.

tions of Divine Revelation through those Ages and Periods; from the first Embrio of it in *Adam*, to the Close of it in *John* the Baptist; in whom the *time past* ended, and the *last days* began.

In divers manners, πολυτρόπως, according to the manifold Ways the Divine Spirit thought fit to communicate it self; whether by Illapses on the Persons inspired, or by Raptures, Visions, Voices, &c.

4. The Perfection and Completion of Divine Revelation; *God hath in these last days spoken by his Son.* So that what was gradually, and at *undry times*, delivered in *time past* to the Prophets, was at once entirely and perfectly revealed by the Son of God, *whom he hath appointed heir of all things.*

Under the First of these I shall shew,

1. What we mean by Revelation.
2. The Possibility of God's revealing himself so to the Creature, that the Creature shall certainly and evidently know that it is God that speaketh.
3. The Expediency, Usefulness, and Necessity of a Revelation, with respect

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

9

spect to the Circumstances Mankind are in.

Sermon
I.

Under the Second I shall shew,

1. That as it's possible for God to reveal himself, and expedient and necessary for Man that there should be a Revelation; so God has actually thus revealed himself *at sundry times, and in divers manners by the Prophets, through the several Periods before spoken of, and in the last days by his Son.*

2. I shall consider the difference between a Real and Pretended Revelation, and how we may distinguish the True from the False.

3. I shall shew, that the Scriptures of the Old and new Testament contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

Under the Third,

1. I shall consider the several Ways by which God did reveal himself *in time past by the Prophets*, as by Illapses, Inspirations, Visions, &c.

2. I shall endeavour to shew the Difference between Divine Inspirations, and Diabolical Illusions, Natural Impressions, and Delusory Imaginations,

3. I

~
Sermon
I.

3. I shall consider the several Periods before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel; and the gradual Progress of Revelation from first to last, from the lower to the higher Degree, and the perpetual Respect one had to the other.

4. I shall consider why God did thus gradually, and at *sundry times*, proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind; and why he did not at the first communicate his Will to them as fully, and perfectly, as he did *in the last days by his Son*.

Under the Fourth,

I shall shew the Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation till the End cometh when our *Lord shall be revealed from Heaven*, and shall *deliver up the Kingdom to the Father*.

I have chosen thus at once to lay in order the Scheme of what I intend (God granting Life and Assistance) to pursue; that so the Dependence of one upon another, and the Assistance each Point gives to the other throughout the whole, might be the better observed.

I. Where

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

II

I. I am to begin with Revelation.

Sermon
I.

I. Where I am to consider, What we mean by Revelation; which is nothing else in the first Notion, but the making known that which before was a Secret; so Things *Revealed* and *Secret* are opposed, *Dent.* 29. 29.

And when 'tis applied to a Religious Use, it's God's making known Himself, or his Will, to Mankind, over and above what he has made known by the Light of Nature and Reason.

Here we may observe, that there are Three Classes, into which whatever is the Object of our Knowledge may be reduced.

I. There are Things of pure and simple Nature, and knowable by the Light of it, without Revelation; of this kind, is the Knowledge of God by the Effects of a Divine Power and Wisdom in the World (as has been shewed) of which the Apostle treats, *Rom.* 1. 20. *The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.*

2. There are Things of pure and simple Revelation, that are not know-
able

Sermon
I.

able by the Light of Nature, but only by Revelation; and if not revealed, are never in this state (at least) to be known or found out by Mankind; of this sort is the Salvation of the World by Jesus Christ, which was not discoverable by Men or Angels; so the Apostle describes the Mystery of it, *Ephes. 3. 9, 10. Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,---- to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God. So 1 Pet. 1. 12.*

3. There are Things partly of Nature, and partly of Revelation, discoverable by the Light of Nature, but imperfectly, which we see, as it were, *through a Glass darkly*; and so they need Revelation to give them farther Proof and Evidence; of this the Apostle gives an Instance, *2 Tim. 1. 10.* when he saith, *our Saviour brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel, φωτισαυτε*, making it as evident as the Light; whereas before it was rather wished for, than certain, as was the case of the Heathens; or much involv'd in Types, as among the

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

13

the *Jews*, *Hebr.* 9. 9, 24, &c. So that Revelation, of which sort soever it is, is supernatural, and is only from God. Sermon
I.

II. I shall shew the Possibility of a Revelation, and that Almighty God, if he so pleases, can so reveal himself to the Creature, that the Creature shall certainly and evidently know that the Revelation comes from God.

This one would reasonably think should need no Proof; and I shall therefore briefly touch upon it, that I may proceed to the Third, which I principally intend to make the Subject of this present Discourse.

I say, it's possible for God to reveal himself to his Creatures.

(1.) Why should this be questioned, when we every Day see Men mutually discover their Minds each to other; and by the Use and Direction of certain Organical Powers, signify their Intentions, Desires, and Commands? And why may not the Creator reveal his Will to the Creature, when one Creature thus can do it to another?

(2.) Why should this be questioned, when we may by certain Evidences

14 *The Possibility, Expediency, and*

~
Sermon
I.

dences know that a Person is sent from God? And then certainly the Person that produces such Evidences as are to the satisfaction of others, may himself be satisfied of the Truth of his own Commission, and the Certainty of a Divine Revelation. The former, that others may be satisfied concerning a Mission from God, is evident from such Things declared, which none but God could reveal, as Prophecies; and such Things done, which none but God, in Man, could do, as Miracles. Where these are, they are as evident Proofs of a Revelation and Mission from God, as the Works of Creation are a Proof of a Divine Agent. The Works of Creation prove a God, because they are worthy of such an Infinite Cause, and what none but such a Cause could produce: And when such Things are discovered, which none but an Omniscient Being could discover; and such Things done, which none but an Almighty Power could do; we are, by a Parity of Reason, as sure that there is such a Revelation by which such Things are made known, and in Confirmation

of

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

15

of which such mighty Works are done.

Sermon

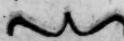
I.

(3.) If this be questioned, it must be from a Deficiency in God to impart such a Revelation to Man; or that there is an Incapacity in Man to receive it. But how can God's Power herein be questioned that he can operate thus on the Soul, when he both created it, and is thoroughly acquainted with all the secret Springs of Motion, all the Tendencies and Inclinations, all the Thoughts and Desires of it, and consequently must be supposed to have a Power of directing it as he pleases? And how can there be any Incapacity in Man, when as to the Matter he can both receive it, and deliver it as he received; and as to the Manner, it's in a way suitable to his Faculties, and is therefore call'd here, God's *speaking* to the Prophets, which is so as the other may understand.

This is a Matter so evident, that it has been generally believed throughout the World among the Heathens; and therefore nothing more common than to have Oracles, Places where they were wont to consult their Deities, as well as the Jews had theirs.

A

16 *The Possibility, Expediency, and*

 A Subject I am not at present concerned in, but it's sufficient to shew what has been the sense of all Ages in this Case: And which even those that would call this in question, in part consent to, while they grant somewhat equivalent to it, if not a Branch of it, I mean Prophecy; which when it falls not within the Power of any Natural Causes, is the Product of what is Supernatural, and what the Prophet must then receive from a higher Hand, God.

Sermon
I.

Grant this, and the whole will follow; for if it be possible in one Case, it's possible in all, to one and the same Infinite Power.

III. I am to consider the Expediency, Usefulness, and Necessity of Revelation; for that is here supposed, when it's said, *God spake in time past, and in these last days*; that is, from the Beginning of the World to that Time.

Now Revelation is a Means extraordinary (as has been shewed) and consequently such as the Means are, such must the Case be, extraordinary; for God, not doing any Thing in vain, cannot be supposed to use extraordinary

Necessity of Divine Revelation. 17

nary Means, where the Case is ordinary, and may as well be served by ordinary Means. Thus it is in Miracles, which are Acts above the common Standard of Nature, and are then only exerted, when nothing less will engage the Attention or Faith of Mankind. And so it is in Revelation, which is to the Light of Reason, what Miracles are to the common Law of Nature, Supernatural and Extraordinary; and consequently where Almighty God takes that Course for the Information of Mankind, it shews that there is some Deficiency or Corruption that calls for it, and makes it expedient and necessary. As it was with *Adam* at his first Creation, who being an utter Stranger to himself, and the World he was at once brought into, without some further kind of Information, instead of a Pleasure he might have taken in viewing the Glorious Fabrick of the Heavens, and the Variety of Creatures in the Earth, must have been full of Amazement and Confusion. For in so wide a Scene as was before him, where must he begin, or where could he hope to end? How divided must

Sermon
I.

~
Sermon
I.

he be in his own Mind? What a cold and dry Speculation would it have been, if he had hit upon it, to have concluded, with a Modern Philosopher, *Cogito, ergo sum; I think, therefore I am?*

He indeed felt himself to be, but how he came to be, he knew not; for he saw nothing about him that could either be supposed to have given him that Being, or could tell him how he came by it. He saw he had a Body, and a Body that obsequiously moved as he pleased to direct and determine; but what that Body was originally made of, he could not possibly tell: For how could he suppose such warm, soft, and tender Flesh, those firm and well compacted Joynts, those radiant and sparkling Eyes (which he had as other living Creatures) that moveable and limber, and well-complectioned Matter of which his Body consisted, should be formed out of cold, moveless, crumbling, and shapeless Earth?

He felt his Body move, and pliable in all its Motions to his Will, and quick as Thought to answer his Mind, but what that inward Principle

Necessity of Divine Revelation. 19

ple was that moved it, he was wholly ignorant; nor could he possibly, of himself at that Instant, conceive that there was an Immaterial Spirit that was vitally United to a Gross and Material Body, that was the Principle of all, and was as distinct from the Body in its Nature and Subsistence, as if it were not United at all to it. He might observe the Creatures about him of different Sorts, that there were certain Notes that each Kind had, and all were known and understood among themselves; but that notwithstanding they were all dumb to him, and he to them; and what it was that made the Difference, he could not understand. When he pleased himself in the Contemplation of the Heavens above, and that glorious Luminary that gave (as he perceived) Light to all about him; he could not tell whether it was an intelligent Being, and that as it gave Light to all, so it was Superior to them: And when that set, he knew not but he was to be inclosed in perpetual Darkness. When a heavy Stupidness began to seize himself, and he was forced to submit to the Power of it, he knew

Sermon
I.

~
Sermon
I.

not but it was to end that Life, which was that Day began, and that he was to close his Eyes, and conclude his Life together.

So that though he had what we call Reason, and suppose it as his Body, in its prime ; yet even that Reason must have been his Torment for a while ; when it made him inquisitive, but could not give him Satisfaction.

To prevent which Disorder and Confusion he would otherwise be in, at the first opening of his Eyes and his Mind together, as it was necessary that he that was to begin the World, should be Created in a full Age and Strength ; and that he that was alone, should have a present Power and Faculty of Elocution and forming of Words for the Conversation he was to have with the *Help* designed for him : So it was requisite that he should have some immediate Inspiration or Impression, to inform him of what was necessary for him to know, as to God, himself, and the World ; and which he could not have known without such Inspiration ; or the slow and tedious Compass of Observation,
and

Necessity of Divine Revelation. 21

and so must have waited for satisfaction till Time and Experience had formed his Judgment, and made him a wise Philosopher.

Sermon

L

But this *Adam* was at the first, and so forthwith knew whom it was that he was to own as the Author of his Being, and of what his Body was made, and by what means an intelligent Spirit came to be inclosed in a Material Body; and could as soon resolve all those perplexing Doubts, which otherwise he would have been assaulted with, as he understood at first Sight that *Eve* was bone of his bone; and knew how to give Names to the Creatures suitable to their Natures, *Gen. 2. 19, 23.*

But now the Reasons for such an Inspiration to *Adam* were Personal, belonging to him alone; but after what manner the Divine Wisdom would have imparted the Knowledge of it self to *Adam's* Posterity, if he and they had stood and continued in a State of Primogenial Innocency; or whether there would, in those Circumstances, have been any need of a Supernatural Inspiration after the Revelation made to *Adam*, from whom

~
Sermon

I. they might have infallibly receiv'd it ; no more concerns us, than it doth to know how Mankind would then have been disposed of when they were not to dye, but to have subsisted in the same State, Body and Soul inseparably United : Those are among the *secret things which belong unto God*, but *things revealed belong unto us*.

We must therefore alter the Scene, and consider Mankind in a State of Imperfection and Depravation ; and there we shall find Revelation absolutely necessary as a Remedy against a fourfold Mischief, which, without it, would undeniably ensue ; as with respect to the Confusion *Adam* was in by reason of Guilt ; the Danger he was in from his Enemy, the subtle and malicious Serpent ; the Discouragement he was under from the Impotency and Disorder he found in his Faculties ; which like a Dislocation in the Joynts, though fit in themselves for Action, yet being removed out of their Sockets, are not capable of Discharging their Functions : And the Misery, that he could not but be sensible was coming upon him from the Depravation of his Nature.

This

Necessity of Divine Revelation. 23

This being the State of Fallen Man, there was need of a Supervenient Revelation to recover him, as well as it was the Determination of the Divine Goodness to design it. Sermon
I.

There was need of this to comfort him under the Sense of his Apostacy, and the Guilt he had contracted, to prevent his Despair: To fortify him against the Power of his insolent and triumphant Adversary, and to aid him under his contracted Disability, for preventing his Discouragement: And to caution him against the sad Effects of his Depravation, or the falling into a Repetition of a new Disobedience, for preventing his Presumption.

For these Reasons Almighty God so soon interposed in the Garden by a new Revelation of Himself, and instructed him both in his gracious Design to restore him to Favour, and in the Method he would observe for that Purpose. This is implied in what he saith to the Serpent, *Gen. 3 15. I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.*

Sermon
I.

Thus the Gospel was preach'd to *Adam*, who was the first Prophet to whom the Mystery of Salvation was revealed ; to which those Places in the *New Testament* seem to refer to, *Luke* 1. 70. *As he spake by the mouth of his holy Prophets since the World began; ἀπ' αἰῶνος*, from the Beginning, so *Acts* 3. 21.

This was the Case of *Adam*, and the Exigence he would have been in, without this immediate and comfortable Revelation.

And the Condition of his Posterity would have been worse than his, had this Revelation died with this their Progenitor, and not have been transmitted to them.

For besides the State of Guilt, which must equally have invaded them as it did him, and what Conscience in them could no more quietly digest, than in him ; there were several Disadvantages they laboured under, which he did not.

As if we consider *Adam* in a bare State of Nature (without any Supernatural Provision) he had this Advantage above his Posterity, That being the first Man, and created in a full

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

25

Sermon
I.

full Age, he was free from all Pre-possessions of Sense or Education; and in the first Moment of his Being, had his Reason clear in the Fountain of it, like the Sun in its Meridian Glory; and all his Faculties bright, and as ripe at once for Observation and Reflection, as his Body was for Action.

But his Posterity growing up from their Infancy among sensible Objects, from thence would (in a meer Course of Nature) have received all their Information; and by slow Degrees from Things Visible, must have argued themselves into the Belief of Things Invisible; And from the Effects of a Supreme Cause, to the Supreme Cause it self; which in the Apostle's Words, *Acts 17. 27.* would be to *seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him*, [*ψηλαφῶσιν*, as Men blundering in the dark] *and find him.*

In such Danger would the Fundamental Principles of Natural Religion have been, if there had been no Revelation to prevent it: And this was the Reason of such a Provision by Inspired Persons, to preserve those Principles alive and safe; of the num-
ber

~
Sermon
I.

ber of whom *Abel* is accounted, and therefore called a Prophet, *Luke* 11. 50, 51. and *Enoch*, *Jude* 14. and *Noah*, *2 Pet.* 2. 5.

But now as the Rays of the Sun, the farther they are projected, grow weaker and weaker; so it was in the Derivation of these Principles, which lost very much of their Primitive Lustre; and notwithstanding the Certainty of the Evidence, the Credibility and Authority of those Holy Patriarchs; Vice, like a Deluge, broke in upon the World, so that *every imagination of the thoughts of their Hearts* (generally speaking) *was only evil continually*, *Gen.* 6. 5.

And if now when there was a Revelation, and a Revelation seconded by the Authority of such Eminent Persons, the World so soon grew corrupted, what would it not have been, if there had been no such Revelation, or no such Curators of it?

This the World was soon sensible of after the Flood; for notwithstanding so late and astonishing an Instance of the Divine Vengeance, yet in their several Dispersions, for want of a Revelation, they lost the sense

of

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

27

Sermon
I.

of the true and great Principles of Religion ; some, as the *Chaldeans*, turning it into a vain Inquiry into the influences of the Heavenly Bodies ; others placing their Religion in ridiculous and opprobrious Superstitions, as the *Egyptians* ; others pleasing themselves in nice Disputations, and the Vanity of new discovered Deities and Religions, as the *Greeks* : And all acting in Divine Matters, as if they were in inextricable Labyrinths, being distracted and eternally divided about the Origine of the World, whether it were Eternal, or Accidental, or the Product of a Divine Power ; about the Origine of Evil, whether it was natural, or proceeded from some malevolent Agent ; about the Government of the World, whether it be by different Deities, Good or Evil ; or whether by none, but be wholly acted by the Levity of Chance, or the immutable Law of Destiny and Fate.

So that in process of Time the World was brought into the Condition of *Elymas*, Acts 13. 8, 11. that once had the Advantage and Pleasure of Sight, but upon the Opposition he made

28 *The Possibility, Expediency, and*

made to St. Paul, immediately there fell
 Sermon
 I.

on him a mist and a darkness, and he went about seeking some to lead him by the hand. Too close a Representation of the Condition of Mankind in that Degenerate State, who because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God---- but became vain in their imaginations; and their foolish heart was darkned, Romans i. 21. Of which Darkness and Confusion in Matters of the greatest Importance to the World, the Commonalty as well as the Philosophical Part of Mankind was sensible, and of the Necessity of a Revelation, or somewhat beyond Nature, Reason and Argumentation, to remove these Difficulties, to inform them of what they could not otherwise know, and to clear up to them what they did know, but imperfectly.

Of which, I shall offer some undeniable Instances.

i. They universally complained of the Loss they were at, and of the Insufficiency of all their Maxims and Principles, of all their Enquiries and Speculations, to give them any tolerable Satisfaction; so that they were in nothing more divided, than

about

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

29

Sermon
I.

about what Happiness is, as *St. Austin* from *Varro* has shew'd: And therefore there was somewhat further necessary to satisfy them, or else they must forever remain unsatisfied.

2. There was nothing more desired than a Revelation, and therefore they were prone to hearken to all Pretences to it; and when they conceived, or were made to believe it was a Revelation, they were in nothing more obsequious and pliable. So that to gain Authority to his Laws, and to keep the People quiet and orderly, *Numa Pompilius* did then pretend he had all by Revelation from the Nymph *Egeria*; as *Mahomet* of later Years, from the Angel *Gabriel*, or immediate Infusion. And of such Authority was this Pretence, that as *Tully* saith, *There was nothing so absurd which was not maintained by some of the Philosophers*; so I may say, There was nothing so foolish, or wicked, which was not an Ingredient in the Worship they gave to their Deities. Inasmuch, as the Nature of Things should be perverted, Reason and Humanity should be abandoned, and God himself be made worse than those that worshiped him, in com-

~
 Sermon
 I.

Compliance with their pretended Revelations. What Beastiality and Lewdness! what savage and barbarous Practices and Rites were allowed and required! The Blood of Captives, and of their own Children, must be a Libation; nay, even Suicide was not only Honourable, but a Religious Martyrdom, if the Oracle commanded it; and they chose rather to be unnatural to the highest Degree, than not to be Obedient to Divine Revelation. Now of what Authority must that be, which should over-rule the Laws of Nature, and so infatuate Mankind, that they should not be able to espy the Imposture? And what could thus impose upon them, if they were not sensible of the imperfect State they were in, and the Need they stood in of some higher Principle, and greater Light to direct them, than that of Nature?

3 There was no Nation without a Revelation, that is, without some Pretence to it, and which they generally vouched for their Rites and Religious Observances; from whence it was, that there was scarcely a People of any Note in the more Civilized Parts

of

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

31

Sermon
I.

of the World that had not their Sibyls, such as were accounted to be the Mouth of their God ; to be sure none in any Part of the known World without an Oracle, that they repaired to, and whose Injunctions they readily obeyed.

The Use I make of all this is to show, what a Sense Mankind had of a Revelation, and what all the World has thought Expedient, if not Necessary, which was the Thing to be proved.

From what has been said, we may observe,

I. What a Happiness it is to have a Revelation, by which Mankind are *brought out of darkness into a marvellous light* ; and from an endless and fruitless Enquiry, *Who will shew us any good?* are placed in a quiet and full Possession of it. If there be no Revelation, we are, as it were, *without God in the world* ; and know not whether that Divine Power be our Friend or our Enemy ; or whether it shall be exerted to our Good or our Ruin. If there be no Revelation, *we are still in our sins*, and have no Sanctuary against the Accusation of our own embittered Consciences, the
Fears

~
 Sermon
 I.

Fears of our own guilty Minds, or the Justice of an incensed Deity. If there be no Revelation, we have *no hope*, and can have no Comfort in our Death, and no Assurance of Immortality after it. If there be no Revelation, we are in a perpetual Maze, as if we were at Sea without Star or Compass, and knew not what Course to take to gain our Harbour. So thoughtful and pensive, so confounded and lost is Mankind without this, that if I were to chuse whether I would have no Revelation, or a false one, for the quiet of my own Mind (did I believe the false one to be true) I would rather chuse the Content of the latter, than the Distraction of the former, and leave it to my own Reason to rectifie the manifest Mistakes in it, rather than have my hovering Reason to be my constant Affliction under the Want of Revelation.

But Blessed be God that there is no Cause for such a Supposition, and that we have all the Reason in the World to believe there is a Revelation; a Revelation that is such as all Mankind would desire, that touches upon all Points necessary to our Comfort
 and

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

33

~
Sermon
I.

and entire Satisfaction, as to the Nature and Will of God, the present and future State of Mankind, the Providence that governs this World, and the Rewards of another. A Revelation, where all the Parts of it agree together, and bear a Conformity to the Nature of Things, to the Holiness, Justice, and Mercy of God, and to the Reason of Mankind; where there is a System of the best Principles, and a Scheme of the best Rules and Directions; and which, like the Book of Nature, the more it's viewed and consulted, the more do the lively Characters of a Divine Hand and Wisdom appear in the Composure.

A Character this is that the Book of Scripture exactly answers. For what Holy Precepts! What Heavenly Promises! What Useful Examples! What Excellent Encouragement, do the Sacred Pages abound in! Such as are sufficient to direct us in every Point of our Duty, to inform us in every necessary Truth, to establish our Hearts in every Condition of Life, to enable us to encounter all the Difficulties of it with Resolution, and to

D

bear

~
Sermon
I.

bear all the Evil of it with Patience and Resignation. Here behold God reconciled to Mankind, the trembling Sinner pardoned, the Weak sustained, the Doubtful satisfied, and nothing wanting on God's Part to make us Happy, if we are not wanting in a fit Disposition of Mind to receive it.

So that if there be any Revelation, it is the Christian; if that be not a Revelation from God, there is no Revelation in the World; and if that be a Revelation, that only is so, and there can be no other.

II. Such as the Revelation is, such is the Obligation; the Authority it receives from God, the Obligation lies upon us to obey, as well as believe it. *The times of ignorance God winked at, and overlook'd; but now he commandeth all Men every where to repent, Acts 17. 30.* He hath commanded them by a Revelation, which is of universal Concernment, and extends its Authority over the World. So that a bad Man is no better or safer for a Revelation, how perfect soever it be, and how great soever the Advantages of it are, than he that is without Revelation; nay, so much the worse, as
the

Necessity of Divine Revelation.

35

Sermon
II

the latter is a State of Unbelief, the former of Disobedience; this errs without his Will, but the other with it. and therefore if the Heathens, who had only the Book of Nature to read, and a faltering Reason for their Guide, were yet so far inexcusable, because that *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,* Rom. i. 21. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? which at first was spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, &c.* Heb. 2. 3, 4.

What remains then, but since the Grace of God, in the Revelation of the Gospel, hath appeared unto all men, that we be thereby taught to deny ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily in this present World. And then we may comfortably look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. 2. 11.

SERMON II.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

IN which Words, I have observed there is,

I. A Description given of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*, and declaring his Will to Persons chosen for that Purpose.

II. The Certainty of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, and taken for granted, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake, &c.*

III. The

Divine Revelation.

37

Sermon
II.

III. The Order observed in delivering this Revelation; it was at *sundry times*, and in *divers manners*: In time *past by the Prophets*, and in the *last days by his Son*. It was *πολυμερῶς*, in parts, and in several Periods and Manifestations; and *πολυτρόπως*, in several Ways, by Illapses, Visions, &c.

IV. The Perfection and Conclusion of all, 'tis *in the last days by his Son*; whom he hath appointed heir of all things, &c.

Under the first I have shewed,

1. What we mean by Revelation, in contradistinction to Natural Light.

2. The Possibility of it.

3. The Expedience, Usefulness, and Necessity of it.

It is the Second I am to proceed to, *viz.* The Certainty,

Under which I shall shew,

I. That God has reveal'd himself; or that there has been such Revelation.

II. The Difference between pretended and Real Revelation.

III. That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain such a Revelation, and have upon them all

the Characters necessary and belonging to such Revelation.
 Sermon
 H.

I. That there has been a Divine Revelation.

What I have principally in my Eye, is the Proof of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures; but for the present I shall lay that aside, and take my Rise towards it from such general Principles and Observations as are founded upon Reason; or such particular Instances and Matters of Fact as manifestly proceeded from Revelation.

And accordingly I shall dispose of what I have to say in Proof of it under these Four Heads; as we have for it,

1. A Rational or Moral Evidence.
2. A Natural.
3. A Traditionary or Testimony.
4. A Supernatural.

First, Moral: Where in the first place I take for granted what I have before proved, *viz.* That a Divine Revelation is Expedient, Useful, and Necessary; and upon that Supposition shall attempt to prove the *Certainty* of it.

I ac-

Divine Revelation.

39

Sermon
II.

I acknowledge, where the Necessity is created by our own Fault, there lies no Obligation upon the Creator to provide a Remedy ; and since the Necessity Mankind is now in, proceeded from their Apostacy, that Necessity can in reason be no just Plea for it, nor a sufficient Excuse in the want of it. When Man was created in such a State as made Revelation a necessary Help to his Reason, God immediately afforded him such an extraordinary Manifestation of himself : But when he forfeited that Divine Gift, he could have no allowable Right or Claim to it ; For *to him that hath*, and improves what he hath, *shall be given* ; but *to him that hath not*, and takes no care to preserve and improve it, may justly be denied what was otherwise fit and necessary for him to have. Matth. 13.
12.

This indeed is the Case, if rigorously stated ; but considering the miserable Circumstances Mankind were in after the Fall, more especially through want of a Revelation, we may reasonably conclude, That the Goodness of God would no less in-

~
Sermon
II.

cline him to give it, than if he had been obliged to it by a special Grant, Promise, or Covenant. Decrees are Secrets lock'd up in the Breast of Almighty God; and whatever Good is therein intended, how beneficial soever they may be in the Event, yet afford no Satisfaction to us, till they are opened and revealed: And though the Redemption of Mankind were decreed, and were according to Circumstances to operate, and in due season to be fully executed, yet what would They have been the better, if for 4000 Years together that Decree had lay hid in the Bosom of the Father, and the Decree had never been a Promise, and that Promise had never before that time been revealed unto them? So that had we no such Promise upon Record, as *The seed of the woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head*; yet however, we might be as sure that there was some such Kind of Revelation made to *Adam*, some Promise of Forgiveness, when God did intend to redeem him and all Mankind, as there was a Design to redeem them: It being as necessary toward their present Comfort to have a Revelation

Divine Revelation.

41

Sermon
II.

tion of that Mercy in their Redemption, as Redemption it self was necessary toward their Happiness.

And this will farther be confirm'd, if we consider what has been before proved in the former Discourse, That all Men have had a Sense of the Want of a Revelation; and have been possess'd with an earnest and impatient Desire of obtaining it; which being a Desire becoming Human Nature, useful and fit to be cherish'd, it is not to be conceiv'd, that where there is Provision made to answer all sensible and natural Appetites throughout the Creation, that this no less importunate, tho' supervenient Desire, should have no Regard paid to it, but be suffered, like *Etna*, to be always burning within, tormenting, as it were, the Bowels of Mankind with an unquenchable Fire, or an unsatiable Desire of kuowing what was not to be known, and of obtaining what was not to be obtained. This is a State that the Consideration of God's Goodness will not admit us to suppose; and we must therefore necessarily conclude, That the same Divine Power and Wisdom that made Man a reasonable

~
Sermon
II.

sonable and inquisitive Being, and has allowed him a World of Wonders to employ that Faculty in the Contemplation of, hath also provided for that Noble Desire of knowing what the Will of his Maker is, and what relates to his own Eternal Welfare; and that is, by a Revelation. Indeed without this, 'tis with him as with one that is born blind, that whatever other Evidence he may have of the Being of a God, wants one of the most convincing of all, which is, The Wonders of an Almighty Power and Incomprehensible Wisdom, conspicuous in the Frame of Nature, and the visible Parts of the Creation: So whatever Sense Men, that have only Reason for their Guide, may have of the Mercy and Goodness of God; whatever they may observe in the Course of his Providence to confirm them in the Belief of it; whatever Hopes they may have of it, from the general Notion of the Divine Nature; whatever Desire they may have of it, from a Sense of their own Misery, yet they want that Evidence of it, which, as we find by constant Experience, alone can satisfy and compose their doubt.

Divine Revelation.

43

Sermon
II.

doubtful and distracted Minds, and that is *Certainty*, or, which is the same, *Revelation*, by which, and nothing less, that *Certainty* is to be attained. And therefore we have just Reason to believe That was not wanting to the First Ages of the World: For the same Reason we have to believe God to be good, the like Reason we have to believe that he did after that Manner make himself known in those early Times from the first, to Mankind.

But it may be said, What is all this Reasoning to Matter of Fact? For if after all there has been no such Revelation, or no Proof can be made of it, That is more than a Thousand Speculative Arguments for it. And besides, supposing there was once a Revelation, what was that to those Ages and Nations that afterwards wanted it, and were condemned, as it were, to *sit in darkness, and the shadow of death*?

The last of these is not to be denied, and so I shall first of all consider it. And in Answer to it, it shall suffice to say for the present, That if there has been such a Revelation made known to the World, and all due Care taken by the Almighty and Beneficent

~
Sermon
II.

neficent Creator for the Preservation of it, and it afterwards be damnified or corrupted, or in fine utterly lost, through the Negligence or Perverseness of Men themselves, the Fault of the Miscarriage wholly rests upon them. The making known the Revelation, was an extraordinary Case, and is a voluntary Act of Grace and Favour in Almighty God; the Preservation of it is the ordinary Case, and belongs to Men: and when once the Extraordinary Case becomes Ordinary, God leaves it to its proper and natural Course to Second Causes, to Human Prudence, Care, and Inspection.

Thus it is with Reason, the Noblest Principle of Human Nature, which, if not attended and nurtur'd, may degenerate into Stupidity, and a kind of Brutality. As it has happened to some Nations in the *Southern Parts of Africa, West-Tartary, and West-Indies*, that notwithstanding the Characters of an Almighty Being, legibly stamped upon the Face of the whole and every Part of the Creation, have so far degenerated, that it has been questioned, Whether they have had any Notion

or

Divine Revelation.

45.

Sermon
II.

or Sense of a God, or any Sort of Worship for him. And so it is in the Case before us: For as God had made a special Revelation of himself to *Adam* after, as well as before the Fall, so he took a very effectual way for the Conveyance and Preservation of it, by the Longevity of those Patriarchs with whom it was deposited, and who were to take Care that it might be preserved inviolable: Three of which alone fill'd up the first Period of 1656 Years, from the Creation to the Flood; viz. *Adam*, *Methuselah*, and *Noah*: So that *Methuselah* lived 243 Years with *Adam*, (for so old was he when *Adam* died); and *Noah* lived 600 Years with *Methuselah* (for so old was *Noah* when *Methuselah* died, and the Flood came). And Four again of the Fathers after the Flood (though the Extent of their Lives was shortned) fell in with the 856 Years from the Flood to the giving of the Law by *Moses* at *Sinai*: So that *Abraham* is supposed to have lived 150 Years with *Shem*, *Jacob* about 20 with *Abraham*, *Levi* 60 Years with *Jacob*, and *Anram* the Father of *Moses* lived in the Time of his Grandfather *Levi*.

Now


Sermon
II:

Now what Course, in the Circumstances and the State the World was at that Time in, could be more fit, if duly observed, for conveying the Matter of a Revelation through the several Periods and Ages of the World, so far as Personal Teaching was sufficient?

And especially, when the Things revealed, and after this Manner to be delivered from Age to Age, were of Importance sufficient to oblige both Teacher and Scholar; and withal so few, as might without any Difficulty be retained. And therefore, if notwithstanding the Method taken by Almighty God for the registering what he had revealed in the Memories of Men, and for delivering it down to future Ages, there was afterwards no Care taken on their Part, and no reasonable Provision made for conserving such a Revelation, but that in process of Time, it was either totally obliterated, or vilely corrupted, the Miscarriage was (as I have said) wholly chargeable upon such as by their Negligence or Wickedness made Mankind to sin, in not delivering, or not faithfully delivering down to Posterity what they

them-

Divine Revelation.

47

Sermon
II.

themselves had received in its Original Purity from their Ancestors. The Case is indeed very lamentable, but what is not to be helped, without Almighty God alters the Nature of Things, turns them out of their proper and ordinary Course, and acts solely by his own Power and Prerogative, either without or above the Agency of Second Causes. Which is no more with Reason to be expected, than that when God has made the Earth in its own Nature fertile, and capable of yielding all Things necessary for Man's Subsistence, with Cultivation; that He should also be obliged to continue it in the same State it was created in; and when by the Sloth and Stupidity of Men it brought forth nothing but Thorns and Thistles, should miraculously make every Tree that is *pleasant to the sight, and good for food*, and whatever was beneficial and necessary, to grow out of the Ground, as at first, and before there was a *Man to till the Ground*. Now if this be unreasonable for Man to expect, it is so then in the Case of Revelation, which God had committed to the Custody of Men themselves, and made them, whose

whose Interest it was, to be the Con-
 servators of it.

Sermon

II.

Having thus far considered the Case of those that had not, or have no Revelation, I shall return to the main Point, which is, To shew that there has been such a Revelation. And that brings me to the

Second Sort of Proof, which I call *Natural*, as it belongs to Things Natural, and is opposed to what is of mere Institution, (which I conceive to be equivalent to Revelation): And they are Speech, and common Notions.

I. *Speech*: For which there is in a Man a Natural Capacity, and Organs admirably contrived and disposed (as we see by Experience). But now, there is a vast Difference in that Case betwixt Us and other Creatures; for other Creatures have not only Organs as we have, fitted for their proper Notes, but at once have all those Organs in Tune and Operation; so that whatever they would signify in their Way, and according to their Kind, they immediately thereby express: But though the Organs of Speech in us are as exquisitely framed, yet we gradually grow up to the Use of them; and

Divine Revelation.

49

Sermon
II.

and again, can never apply them, or know how to use them, without some precedent Instruction: And therefore it has been the Opinion of many, That without hearing others speak, we should be eternally dumb^{*}; as the Experiment of *Psammeticus* King of *Egypt* shews[†], (if true) of shutting up Two Children in separate Caves, where they never heard one Articulate Word, and so could use none.

^{*} *Postellus*
lib. de O-
rig. c. 4.

[†] *Herodotus*
Euterp.
c. 2.

So that now Man must be taught, and as he is taught, so he speaks. But we will put the Case in which there was no Human Instructor, and yet the Person spoke as articulately, and had the free Use of Words, and knew as well how to express his Mind by them from the very first, as if he had had the best Helps for it in the World, and had been never so long a Time versed and practised in it: And that Person was *Adam*, who was created in a full Age, and had none before him; and yet must as soon have Words for Use, and Skill how to use them, as he had to give Names to the Creatures, according to their several kinds. For without this, what

E

Conversa-

~
Sermon
II.

Conversation could he have with *Eve*, or what Comfort could he take in her Presence, (for it was not to be call'd Society) ; and what a Dejection must there be in each of them, when all Creatures had their Notes according to the Species they were of, but they themselves alone were mute. So that though 'tis not expressly said, That *Adam* and *Eve* had any Discourse, yet 'tis as certain from the Reason of the Thing, as it is that God spake to them, or the Serpent and *Eve* spake together. But 'tis certain *Adam* must then be self-instructed, or be instructed by God : He must then invent a Language of himself, or he must be taught by him that made him. If he was to teach himself, how could he know that he was able to speak ; or how can we think he would begin his Conversation by an Attempt that Way ? For 'tis highly probable, that those two would first have begun with dumb Signs, or some external Motions (as we see they ordinarily do, that have no Words which others can understand) ; or if he should at length have found out such an Expedient, and formed some Articulate Sounds, yet what a tedious Course

Course would this have been, and how long before it could be wrought into a Language, that they could first think of Words, and then remember them, and then use them, and then fall into Discourse? Don't we find how difficult it is to learn to speak a Language, when we have all Advantages for it, by Instruction and Discourse with those that speak it; But suppose Two Persons wholly Strangers to one another, and of a Language as different as *Chinese* and *English*, should meet together, and be constrained by Circumstances, being without other Society, to converse with each other; though each had a Language of their own, and knew how to speak and form Words for Pronunciation, yet how long would it be before they could fix the Words for it, and to have a Term for every Thing they were to discourse about; to invent and agree upon it, and then to remember them, and then to use them? And then much more will the Difficulties increase, were these Two in the Case of *Adam* and *Eve*, and to beat out the Track which never any walked in before; to invent Speech it self, and Words to be spoken,

~
Sermon
II.

ken, and sufficient to express the Thoughts of each other, so as to make Company, and that Company agreeable, acceptable, and useful. This must have been the Work of Time, if it had been practicable; and the Difficulty of it would have made each others Company a Burden, rather than a Pleasure, till such time as they could come to a mutual Understanding of one anothers Minds and Inclinations. And therefore to make them *meet Helps* for each other, it was of Necessity that they should have an extraordinary Power communicated from Heaven, and be enabled by that Instinct as soon to speak, as the other Creatures are in a Course of Nature to utter such Voices as are suitable to their Kind, or as Mankind are to express their Passions of Joy or Sorrow by Laughter or Tears.

So that 'tis not without Reason, I rank the Gift of Speech among those things that are of a Divine Infusion, and so equivalent to Revelation.

2. Another Instance of this kind, is what is usually called Common Notions, or Natural Impressions: *Common Notions*, because they are common
to

to all Mankind; and *Natural Impressions*, because they are conceived not to be acquired by any Human Means, such as Education and Instruction, Observation and Experience; but are imprinted on our Nature by an immediate and supernatural Power.

That there are such Notions as all Mankind do agree in, is undeniable; such as the Belief of a God, an Adoration to be given to him; and that there is an Essential Difference between Good and Evil, so that Good cannot by any Art or Endeavour be made or esteemed to be Evil, nor Evil Good: For as the Natures of the Things themselves cannot be altered, so neither can our Conceptions of them.

It is as undeniable, That these Notions or Impressions are so early to be discovered, and do so grow up with our Reason, that they seem not to be the Effects of our Reason, but rather to be antecedent to it; and that it is rather what we find, than what we chuse; what belongs to our Nature, than what we add to it. And accordingly as we have a Notion, so a Sense of those Things, antecedent to all Reasoning and Instruction, which we call

~
Sermon
II.

Conscience, *excusing*, or else *accusing*, according to the Nature of the Things, whether Good or Evil. Now as the Nature of the Things must be before our Conception of them, so both must be before we pass this practical Judgment upon them: And if we do exercise this Faculty antecedent to all Instruction, then so must the Sense of the Things be, about which it is exercised. So the Apostle, *Rom. 2. 14.* *When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, &c.* Which is exactly agreeable to the Phrase of the Wisest among them; So *Aristotle* calls it, the *Natural, Common, and Unwritten Law.*

Ad Ni-
com. l. 4.
c. 5. l. 5.
c. 9. l. 8.
c. 1.
Rhet. l. 1.
c. 10, 13,
15.

But above all, *Cicero* (who best knew the Sense of the Philosophers, and how to express it) doth speak fully to this Point, both as to the Universality of these First Notions, and the Agreement in them by all Mankind, both as to the Nature and Rise of them. *There is, saith he, a certain Law, not written, but native to us, which*

*Pro Mi-
lone.*

Divine Revelation.

55

we have not learned, received, nor read: But we have taken and derived it from Nature it self; to which we were not taught to be conformed, but made; it was not by Institution, but Infusion. This, in another Place, he saith all Men have by a certain *Anticipation*, and calls them *innate Cogitations*; and will allow it to come from no less a Power than what is Divine. *We have*, saith he, *received a Conscience from the Immortal Gods, which cannot be plucked away from us.*

Sermon
II.

L. 1. de
Nat. De-
or. & L. 2.
de Legib.

Pro Clu-
entio.

So that whatever Improvement these Notions and Impressions may receive from an after-Instruction, yet they seem to be implanted in us by the same Power that made us reasonable Creatures, who no more could leave himself without Witness in our Minds, than in the Works of Nature. And being thus antecedent to our own Reasoning, or other Information, can proceed from no other a Principle than Revelation doth, and is therefore equivalent to it.

Thirdly. There is a Traditionary Proof of Revelation, which is by Testimony, or by such Instances as are a Part of the Revelation; and of which, as I

E 4

conceive,

~
Sermon
II.

conceive, no tolerable Account can be given, if they are not allowed to be of Divine Institution. In order to which,

I. I observe, That the Want of a Revelation in any particular Nation or Age, is not an Argument sufficient to prove that there never was any Revelation. For Revelation being more especially of Things not knowable by the mere Light of Nature, may be lost, while the Light of Nature remains. It being in this Case much as it is in Matters of History, which may be derived from one Generation to another, and especially by Registers and Memorials: But if a former Generation be careless and slothful, or the Records not faithfully wrote or kept, the Matters of Fact in one Age are irrecoverably lost in the next, or turned into Fables. Of which, the Earliest Times are too manifest an Instance, and for which Reason *Varro* did not divide them amiss, into ἀδελαν & μυθικόν, *obscure* or unknown, and *fabulous*. Which lasted till the First Olympiad, and that was, at soonest, *Anno Mundi* 3173; when the Historical Age, according to him, begins. Now as the
Want

Want of such Histories will not prove that there never were any such, and much less that there were no Matters of Fact for the furnishing such Histories: So though there be no Revelation, or no Memorials of such a Revelation, in some particular Nations or Ages, it will not necessarily follow that there never was any such Revelation made to the World.

Sermon
II,

2. When I propose the Proof of a Revelation, I would not be understood so much as to suppose, That there was from the beginning, or before the Time of *Moses*, a Pandect or Collection of Divine Revelations; but only that there were Inspired Persons to whom God did (as occasion served) reveal himself *in sundry times and divers manners*, such as *Adam, Enoch, Noah, &c.*

3. Where there has been or is no Revelation, or Pretence to it (if any such Age or People ever were), yet there are or have been in those Ages or Nations, certain Footsteps of such a Revelation; and which, wherever they are found, are as evident Marks of such a Revelation, as Pillars or Crosses found in a Country at present uninhabited are, that there have been
some

~
Sermon
II.

some Persons that have been there before, and have erected those Monuments.

4. I account such Usages, Rites, and Principles, to proceed from Revelation, that have no Foundation in Reason, and the Nature of the Thing, but are correspondent to what we call Revelation; and which can well have no Reason at all assigned for them, if not the Reason given in that Revelation: Such are Expiatory Sacrifices, and other Things relating to Divine Worship.

5. This is the more confirmed, if such Usages, Rites and Principles have been observed, practised, and believed, in Nations that have had no Relation one to another, no Commerce or Communication, nor sometimes Knowledge of one another; for then they must arise from some common Head, from whence they were aboriginally dispersed among the several Branches of the same Stock.

When one People has been mixt with another, as the *Jews* and *Egyptians*; or derived from another, as the *Colchi* from the *Egyptians*; or there have been Commerces and Confederacies,

racies, Wars and Conquests, 'tis no Wonder they intermingle in several Rites and Observances. Of this, we have a notorious Instance in Circumcision, which by the abovesaid Means came to be received by several Nations, as the *Ethiopians*, *Egyptians*, and *Colchi*, the *Phœnicians*, and some of the *Syrians*, as *Herodotus* shews *. But when the Usages, Rites, and Principles have been as well found where there has been no Communication, as where there has; 'tis no less a Sign they descend from one and the same Original, than when the Waters of the Seven Branches of the River *Nilus* have one and the same Taste and Colour, without any Communication, that they do all descend from the main Stream.

In like manner, if we find, suppose, among the Seventy Nations (into which 'tis said Mankind was divided, upon the Confusion of *Babel*) several of the same Rites and Usages, generally speaking, concurring with those of what we call Revelation, we must conclude, That they were observed before that Dispersion, and were wholly owing to as early an Institution.

Among the Instances that I shall make

Sermon II.

* Clio.
cap. 36,
37. *Eu-
terp.*
cap. 104.
V. Bo-
chart
Geogr.
Sacr. Pha-
leg. l. 4.
c. 31.

~
Sermon
II.

make use of for the Proof of a Revelation, I shall begin with those that relate to Divine Worship, such as Time, Sacrifices, &c.

1. *Time.* That there is some particular Portion of Time to be set apart for the Publick Worship of God, either by Divine Appointment, or Human Consent, is absolutely necessary, when it is to be the Act of a Society; for Worship, without some Time for such Society to convene and assemble in, must inevitably end in Confusion and Dissolution.

And therefore as God created the World as a Temple to exhibit and manifest himself in, and created such Beings as should in their several Stations celebrate his Praise; so when he had finished all his Work, he established that Day which he rested upon, to be from thenceforward devoted to that Service; as we may see the Institution, *Gen. 2. 2.* I call this an Institution; for when could that be more seasonably instituted by Divine Authority, than at the Close of the Creation, when the Sanctification and the Reason of it were so immediately connected; *God blessed and sanctified it,*

because

because in it he had rested from all his work? It being not probable that there should be at that Time no Institution, when the Reason for it is expressly given; or that there should be no present Obligation to observe it, when there was an Institution. If God had no sooner finished his Work, but he *sanctified* the Day following, 'tis evident that the Obligation to observe it must begin with the Institution: And if he *sanctified* it, because on that Day he *rested*, 'tis as evident the Institution did begin with the Reason of it. And then how improbable is it that God should *bless* and *sanctify* a particular Day, and yet for the Space of Two thousand Years together should leave that Day in common with the other Days of the Week, without any Distinction? How improbable again, that it should be first instituted and made a Duty to the *Jews* only for a Reason that equally concerned all Mankind as well as them, because he *rested*; and for a Reason existent from the first, as well as in the Time when it was instituted at *Sinai*? 'Tis highly unreasonable to add one *Prolepsis* to another, and to heap

~
Sermon
II.

heap Figure upon Figure, when there is no Necessity for it, contrary to all the Rules of a just Interpretation.

Now if this be an Original and Primæval Institution, we have one Instance of a Divine Revelation, so far as the Scripture is of Authority; and surely we may demand in its Behalf, to have as much Regard paid to it as we give to prophane Histories.

But however, we are not without a concurrent Testimony from Those also in this Particular. For it is manifest, that there hath been of great Antiquity such a Distribution of Time as we call a Week of Seven Days; and, which is more to our Purpose, That the Seventh Day was a Festival and Religious Day. This *Lucian* doth more than Intimate; and long before him, *Solon*, who calls it *Most Holy Day*, in his Elegies, quoted by *Eusebius**; and one earlier than he, *Homer*, who calls it, *ιερόν ἡμῶν*, *The Holy Day*. But *Calimachus*, *Homer*, and *Linus*, are still more Particular; for they say, it was because all the Works of Creation were then finish'd. So *Homer*, *Ἐξ ὁμοῦν ἡμῶν ἔην, καὶ τῷ τετέλειον*

*Hist. p.
678.
Prepar.
l. 13. c. 12.

Divine Revelation.

63

ἡ γενεα ; and 'tis therefore call'd by *Linus*, *The Birth-Day of the World*.

Sermon
II.

Now there is nothing in Nature to point to this; for there is no more to be observ'd from the Motion of the Heavens for such a Septenary Distribution of Time, or Division into Weeks, than there is for the dividing of a Day into Hours: And consequently it must proceed from some Institution, and from a very early Institution, because of what I have observed from the fore-recited Authors, who are of great Antiquity, *especially *Homer* and *Linus*: For *Homer* is supposed to have lived in or about the Time of *Saul*, in the Year of the World 2940, and *Linus* in the Time of the *Judges*, about the Year 2570. The Consideration of which doth make it probable, that these Ancient Poets owed their Information to the general Tradition of the World, rather than to the *Jews*. Indeed *Aristobulus* the *Jew*, from whom *Eusebius* drew the abovesaid Testimonies, saith, these Poets had borrowed them from the *Jewish* Books. But if it be consider'd how little the *Jewish* Books, the Scriptures, were known to the World
before

~
Sermon
II.

before the Translation of them by the Seventy into *Greek*, which was about 300 Years before the Birth of our Saviour; or how little the Opinions of the *Jews* themselves before the Captivity were known abroad, it will hardly be conceiv'd, that these Things should be known so early, and spoke of so positively by the *Greek* Poets, *Homer* and *Linus*, within so short a Time after the Institution of the Sabbath at *Sinai*, as these two liv'd; for *Linus* must have liv'd within less than Half an hundred Years after the Time of *Moses*; and *Homer* in less than 400. Where if we take the lowest Term, that of *Homer*, the *Jews* were hardly in a settled State, and no more in a Condition, than they were disposed in their Temper, if permitted by their Religion, to inform other Nations in the Articles or Mysteries of their Religion. So that it seems very evident, that the Observation of the Seventh Day for the Service of God, ~~was~~ an ancient and general Opinion, and especially of those who may be best presumed to understand what had been the Sense of Mankind in the Ages before, or those in which they lived.

V. Scaliger
de Emen-
dat. Temp.
l. 1.

Divine Revelation.

65

Sermon
II.

lived. And if this was the Opinion of those early Times, conformable to the History of Scripture, we have sufficient Reason to offer this as an Instance of a Revelation.

2. Another Instance of Revelation is Sacrifices, and especially those of Expiation. Amongst all the Rites and Usages relating to Divine Worship, there are none that exceed these in their Antiquity (except the Sabbath) or Extent.

For we no sooner read of God's Reconciliation to Mankind, but that they offer'd Sacrifice; no sooner of Noah's Deliverance and Escape out of the Deluge, but he offer'd Sacrifice: And without doubt, as it begun, so it continued, and was as much dispersed and observed among Mankind before the Flood, as after it. But how probable soever it is, that this Rite was thus universally observed before, yet that we are not so certain of, as we are of the Observation of it after the Flood, when there was no Age nor Nation where it was not to be found how dispersed soever they were; of which no tolerable Account is to be given, unless it be allowed to have
F been

~
 Sermon
 II.

been in use before the Dispersion at *Babel*, and that it was of Divine Institution. It must have been, I say, in use before that Dispersion; for how could all Nations fall into one and the same Practice, and have the same Opinion of Sacrifices, when there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing to lead them to it, if it had not been, that they had all descended from one Blood, from one Family, from one Body, by which means it was convey'd into all the several Branches issuing from it, and went along with them where-ever they went.

*Outram de
 Sacrificiis,
 l. i. c. i.*

Now the Question is, Whence this should arise, and what gave it this universal Acceptance and Authority; Whether the Invention of some eminent Persons, suppose, in those early Times? Or whether it was by Revelation from God, and of his special Institution?

There seems no great Reason to think this Service should proceed meerly from the Invention of Men, even of those pious and well-disposed Persons, since (as I have said) there is nothing in the Nature of the Thing
 to

Divine Revelation.

67

Sermon
II.

to lead to it. For how could it be supposed that this should be acceptable to Almighty God, which in it self holds no Conformity, nor is at all futable to his Nature? *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, and drink the blood of goats?* Is a true Representation of it. *Psal'm 50. 13.*

It might become a sanguinary sort of Dæmons, or false Gods, and wicked Spirits, to be pleased with the Fumes and Reakings of the Bleeding Sacrifice, as the Heathens generally thought: But Men of any Understanding would rather chuse a *reasonable Service* for the God that made them reasonable Creatures, and might presume another Sort of Sacrifice would be more acceptable than this, and acceptable without it, *viz.* a Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer, of a pure Mind, and a good Life, which the wiser Heathens did in their Opinion exceedingly prefer. But as for the Sacrifices and Blood of Beasts, such as *Pythagoras* and *Plato* spoke of them often with Regret and Displeasure; and others wonder'd how they first came into the World, as *Porphyry*, *Euséb. Præpar.* that wrote expressly against them.

~
Sermon
II.

* Quoted
by Porphyry
ἐκ ἀπο-
στολῆς.
Lib. 2.
Sect. 58.

What Expression could thereby be given, suppose, of Mens Gratitude to God for their Being, and their Preservation? *Who of all Mankind is so stupidly credulous, so foolish, that can think the Gods delighted with such a Present of Bones, Gall, and Blood, which a hungry Dog would scarcely touch; and that they should repay the Favour to those that offer it; said an ancient Heathen Poet.**

But if we descend to Expiatory Sacrifices, who could think that *the Blood of Bulls and of Goats could take away Sin*, and that God would accept of that as a fit Compensation for their Crimes; the Blood of a Brute for that of a Man, the Life of one that is not in its own Power, instead of him that was?

And if Men were so weak as of their own Accord to offer it; can we think the Almighty Creator would accept of what was for it self only unbecoming his Majesty, and be so highly delighted with it, as to testify his Acceptance of *Abel's* by the Descent of a Miraculous Fire to consume it; and to *smell a sweet savour* upon *Noah's Oblation*; to appoint it as a Sign of his Covenant with *Abraham*; and

ἐν τῇ ἐκδο-
σὶ.
So Theodo-
tion.

Gen. 8. 20,
21.

Gen. 15.
8, 9.

Divine Revelation.

69

and lastly, to embody it into the *Mosaical Institution*?

Sermon
II.

It was enough, one would think, that the Majesty of Heaven and Earth had accepted of the good Will of the first Inventors, how poor and low soever the Invention was; but it was too great a Condescension to do by these as the Heathens by their Heroes, to translate them into the Number of their Deities; too much to have such a Mark of the Favour of Heaven, as none of the Divine Institutions could have more.

But why should we think so meanly of those *Ante-deluvian* Patriarchs, of *Adam* and *Abel*, *Enoch* and *Noah*, &c. the first Inventors or Encouragers of this Way of Worship? At this rate happier far were the Inventions of *Jabal*, *Jubal*, and *Tubal-Cain*, that taught others how to order Cattle, to handle the Harp and the Organ, to work in Brass and Iron; for these did serve either the Necessities or Pleasures of Mankind, and were suitable to Gen. 4. 20. their Nature and Condition: But to offer Bestial Sacrifices to an Infinite Spirit, was as if we should present

Sermon
II.

Mankind with the Entertainments and Pleasures of the Brutes; and so it cannot be thought that Men (how low soever their Understandings were) would think the Blood of Beasts a decent Present to their Creator, which indeed would not be so to their Superiors here.

But we have another sort of Character of those Holy Men, who were Persons of great Knowledge, and vast Experience; who both received their Religion from the Almighty, were the great Props and Stays of it in their Generation, and to whom the Care of transmitting it to Posterity was committed; and for which Reason, as well as others, God seemed to have protracted their Lives to so vast an Extent. They were such as were eminent for their Piety; as *Abel's* Faith is one of the renowned Instances, *Heb. 11. 8.* And *Enoch* is said to walk

Gen. 5. 22,
24.

with God, and was in an extraordinary Way rewarded for it. Such again were they as were endued with the

Jude, v. 14.

Spirit of Prophecy, as *Adam, Abel,*
2 Pet. 2. 5. Enoch, Noah.

And therefore it cannot in Reason be supposed, that ever they should think

think the offering the Blood, and burning the Flesh of a Beast, to be a fit Expression of their Gratitude to Almighty God, or a Means to obtain his Favour by way of Expiation for their Sins, without his Institution.

It is then (as far as I conceive) evident, that Sacrifices, of what kind soever, were not invented by Men. But if they were not invented by Men, How came they to be admitted, and at last so much to obtain in the World?

I answer, They were of God's own Institution; and therefore were received by the Patriarchs, and accepted by himself.

But then it may reasonably be demanded, Why they should be thus honoured by a Divine Legislation and Authority, when it is allowed that they are in themselves not suitable to his Nature?

I answer, They were instituted as those Sacrifices were Typical, and had respect to a greater Sacrifice, that of Christ. And therefore 'tis observable, That as Almighty God for the Comfort of *Adam*, and preventing his Despair, (as has been before shewed)

~
Sermon
II.

did immediately after his Expostulation with him, and Sentence pass'd upon him, reveal his Intention to pardon him, and the Means by which it was to be procured and ratified, *The Seed of the Woman*: So in Consequence of this, and to shew their Faith in that Promise, we read in the next Chapter, of their Sacrifices and Offerings which they brought unto the Lord, as a Representation of what they for their Apostacy had deserved, and should have suffered, had not the Divine Mercy interposed.

Now if we have represented this aright, we have a fair Account of an Expiatory Sacrifice, and how it came to take such Place among Men, and to be so universally received.

We have a Reason again how and why it came to be framed into the Law of *Moses*; and why these, and the Rites belonging to them, were made a principal Part of it, and have thereby a Key to unlock many Mysteries in that Law, and to answer many

Heb. 9. 9. Difficulties about it, when it is a *shadow of good things to come.*
Heb. 10. 1.

By this Means again we come to understand the special Providence of
God,

God, that this was so much preserved, and so universally dispersed and received among Mankind. Sermon
II.

By this Means again we have a fair Account how the Doctrine of the Cross, and the Notion of our Saviour's Death as an Expiatory Sacrifice, came to be soon entertained among the *Gentiles*; for being of God's Institution, as he preserved it, so being thus preserved, it became an excellent Introduction, and prepared Mankind for the Belief and Reception of our Redemption by Christ.

To the same Original may the First-Fruits, Priesthood, and Tenth, be re-ferr'd; the first of which was observed from the Time of *Abel*, *Gen. 3.* and the two last long before the Time of the *Mosaical* Law; and therefore are to be derived from an ancient Institution.

But because it may be thought these Instances may be liable to Exception, forasmuch as they are sometimes disputed among those themselves that do contend for a Revelation, I shall proceed to

The *Fourth* Sort of Evidence, which is Supernatural; and that is either it self
a Reve-

Sermon
II.

a Revelation, or the Proof of it; of the former, is Prophecy; of the latter, Miracles.

I. Prophecy, or the foretelling Things to come; whatever Time they are to exist in, near or remote. I add this latter Clause to it, to prevent all Exception, and to distinguish Prophecy truly so call'd, from Sagacity, or Human Providence; which from precedent Observations and proximate Causes, may be often fortunate in its Conjectures or Predictions. But now, as to Infinite Power, all Things are alike possible and easy, and there is nothing great or little, more or less, with respect to it; so to Infinite Knowledge, to which *one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*, all Things, the remotest as well as nearest, are alike present; and there is nothing distant or near with respect to it. And therefore where-ever the true Spirit of Prophecy is, the same Power that can foretell what shall happen to Morrow, could, if he so pleased, as easily foretell what shall happen a Thousand Years hence; since *all things are alike naked and opened unto him with whom we have to do*. Now this sort of Know-

Knowledge can proceed from nothing less than him, who as he knows all Things, so has all Causes in his own Power, and can foresee how they will operate, and what shall be the Event of such Operations, or can dispose them to it as he pleaseth, whatever the Causes be, whether (as we usually say) they are Voluntary, Necessary, or Contingent; and being thus peculiar to him, and his sole Prerogative, 'tis no less than a Species of Divine Revelation. And therefore as none can know the Certainty of such Futurities and Events but God, so none can foretell them but such as he is pleased to reveal them to. From whence it was that *Plato* somewhere calls Prophecy, *κοινωνία*, a *Communication* or *Fellowship* with God. For suppose now we should set before us any *Epocha* or Character of Time, which the Prophecy respects; the 160 Years from *Isaiah's* naming of *Cyrus*, to his Decree for building *Jerusalem*, *Isa.* 44. 28. Or the 350 Years from the Prophet's naming *Josiah*, to the Time he defiled those Idolatrous Places, *1 Kings* 13. 2. *2 Kings* 23. 16. Or the 490 Years in *Daniel's* Weeks, from his

Time

~
Sermon
II

Time to the Death of Messiah, *Dan. 9.*
24. What an Infinite Number of intercurrent Passages must there be, before it be brought in its proper Season to its Accomplishment? And how amazing a Sight would it be, if we could lay our Hand upon the Clue of the Prophecy at its first setting out, and follow it making its Way through all Oppositions and Interferings, to the last Period and Completion! But then if we turn our Thoughts to the chief Subject of Revelation, the Prophecy of the Incarnation of our Saviour, as it began immediately upon the Fall, and passed along through the 61 Generations, for 4000 Years together, it would be like the dispersed Parts of a Human Body, to the Time and State of the Resurrection, that are carried safe and entire through all Transformations; and at last when the *Sea and the Grave* are call'd upon to *give up their dead*, all the Atoms and Particles are recalled from their several Vehicles or Tribes they were joined to, and fall into the same Composition as before in this present State. Much such a Subject have we before us, which after various Windings and

Turn-

Turnings, and an infinite Succession of Causes and Events, we read, *That it might be fulfilled,-----and as it was spoken by the mouth of the holy Prophets, which have been since the world began,* Luke 1. 70.

So that as many Prophecies as we have, or the World ever had, so many Evidences have we of a Supernatural and Divine Revelation.

And this all Mankind have had a Belief of, as is manifest from the Oracles they consulted upon all emergent Occasions; many of which were very ancient, as *Herodotus* tells us that of *Jupiter Hammon* in *Lybia* was. I acknowledge that these were full of Imposture, and despised for it by the Wiser Part of the Heathens, such as *Tully*, *Lib. 1, 2. de Divinat.* and detected, as *Eusebius* shews, *Præpar. Evaug. l. 4. Init. & l. 9. c. 5.*

And I mention these, not that I esteem them of any Authority; rather the contrary; but to shew what the World thought of Prophecy, and which even those Philosophers that diverted themselves with the Mistakes and Impostures of their own Oracles, never questioned whether ever there were

~
Sermon
II.

were any true Prophecy, but always allowed it, and took it for granted.

So that the Impostures of their own Pretenders never engaged them so far, as to call in question the Veracity of all Prophecy, or to deny it where it was able to justify it self.

2. Another sort of Supernatural Evidence, is Miracles; of which, hereafter.

Thus far I have endeavoured to shew, That there has been a Revelation, antecedent to, or where there was no written Revelation: And the Arguments and Instances have been such as were proper to those Circumstances; such as we are led to by the Light of Nature, and Human Observation: And therefore though they receive Light and Confirmation from a written Revelation, are not supposed to depend upon it for their Evidence. And if this Point has been hereby made out and proved, we then find that God has at *sundry times and in divers manners*, revealed himself to Mankind *by the Prophets* and inspired Persons, from the beginning through the *Ante-deluvian* and *Post-de-*
luvian

Divine Revelation.

79

luvian Times, 'till the Promulgation of a written Law by *Moses*.

Sermon

II.

If it be said, That these are far from amounting to a Certainty, and from giving us an infallible Assurance of a Revelation, since some of them are disputed even among those that own a Revelation; as the Original of the Sabbath, and Sacrifices; and at the most are but probable Arguments.

1. I answer, Probability is a fair Step to Certainty; and I may after all affirm, That the Account here offer'd, is the best that can be given of those Instances.

2. There are such Arguments as are taken from the Consideration of God's Nature; and there cannot be a stronger, than what is fetch'd from the Nature of Things.

3. There are other Instances that are equivalent to a Revelation, and can proceed from no lower a Principle; such are Speech and Common Notions; the former of which, in the Circumstances before recited, must be from a kind of Divine Inspiration, and the latter from a Divine Impression.

4. There are those Things, which when they accompany what we call a
Re-

~
Sermon
II.

Revelation, prove the Truth and Certainty of it ; and being recorded in a written Revelation, become of the Body of it, and they are Miracles.

5. There are others that are the Matter of Revelation, and they are Prophecies, especially such as are carry'd along in a continued Train, and mutually confirm each other.

6. There are others that are not only Consonant to what we own to be a Revelation, but to Human Testimonies ; and being confirm'd by both, are of great Authority.

All which laid together, gives us, I may say, unquestionable Evidence, That there has been a Revelation, or that God has made himself and his Will known to the World by Persons chosen out, and inspired, and commission'd by him.

And this is a good Preparative and Introduction for what is to follow, *viz.* That there is a special Revelation, and that Revelation recorded and transmitted by Writing to the World, which is a Point in Reserve, and that will in order be discoursed upon.

S E R

SERMON III.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

IN these Words there is, (as I have shewed)

I. A Description given of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

II. The Certainty of it; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake, &c.* 'Tis taken for granted, and that it needs no Proof.

Sermon
III.

III. The Order observ'd in delivering this Revelation ; it was at *sundry times, and in divers manners ; in time past by the Prophets, and in the last days by his Son.*

IV. The Perfection and Conclusion of all ; *'tis in the last days by his Son.*

Under the First I have shewed,

1. What is meant by Revelation, in contradistinction to Natural Light.
2. The Possibility of it.
3. The Expedience, Usefulness, and Necessity of it.

Under the Second I have shewed,

1. The Certainty of it ; or that there has been such a Revelation.
2. I shall now proceed to shew the Difference between Pretended and True Revelation ; or what are the Characters by which we may know Revelation to be True.

In treating upon which I shall premise,

1. That the proper Subject-Matter of Revelation, call'd here *God's speaking*, being not self-evident, and out of the Road of Nature, requires some extraneous Principles to prove it by. Sensible Objects lye open to the Sense, and need no Proof ; for whoever thought it necessary to labour in proving

Divine Revelation.

83

ving that there is a Sun in the Heavens ; that it rises and sets, and has its stated Times and Periods of Revolution ; which every Man that has his Eye-sight knows and sees as well as himself?

Sermon
III.

And there are Rational Inferences which we make from precedent *Postulata*, that are as evident as the Principles from which they are deduc'd, and which all Men alike agree in.

But in Matters of mere Revelation, there is no manner of Connexion between them and what we know before, and are therefore never to be wrought out, or learn'd by the Book of Nature or Reason ; but are only to be understood and known, as God is pleased to communicate them. We might search and search eternally, and yet never have found out the Mystery of our Redemption ; that Mystery, of which not only the Prophets *enquired and searched diligently*, 1 Pet. i. 10. but also *the angels desire to look (or pry) into*, ver. 12. *magis scire* ; and were oblig'd to wait till the manifold wisdom of God was in its proper Time made known to them by the Church, Eph. 3. 10. (as has been before suggested).

This then being the Subject of Revelation, 'tis reasonable that this Revelation should have some other ways of Proof ; that what is thus Divine in its Discovery, should have a suitable Evidence to justify it.

2. The Matter of Revelation being thus of Divine Inspiration and Authority, must

~
Sermon
III.

also be worthy of God, and of great Importance, and consequently requires a Proof suitable to the Nature and Importance of it.

If the Matter in debate be inconsiderable, we are contented with probable Arguments, nor are we much concern'd which way it is determin'd : As 'tis indifferent whether the Sun or the Earth be the Centre, as long as we receive the Benefit of both : Or whether our Dyet nourishes, or Physick operates by Qualities, or the Texture of its Parts, as long as we find the Happy Effects of it : Let Philosophers and Naturalists write Volumes, and wrangle eternally about these disputable Points, I find not my self concern'd, as long as my Interest is not affected nor concerned in the Quarrel. But when the Matter is of no less consequence than my Eternal Happiness, it requires the most serious Thoughts and Attention to be satisfied which is the Right, and which is the Wrong ; whether there be a Revelation, or which is the True, and which the False ; especially since there are different Pretenders to it.

3. Revelation being the Declaration of God's Will to Mankind, as he doth not require us to believe without sufficient Evidence, so it doth suppose, that there is such Evidence, and that there are some Marks or Signs by which the Truth and Certainty of such Revelation may be known and proved. For otherwise every Pretender to Revelation would challenge our Belief ;

and

Divine Revelation.

85

Sermon
III.

and we should not know but that the True Revelation might be the False, and the False the True.

4. There are some Things so necessary and inseparably belonging to Revelation, that the Want of them will utterly overthrow the Veracity and Authority of it, and yet without further Evidence they are not sufficient to prove it: Of this kind are Self-agreement, a Consonancy to the Principles of Nature, and to the true and certain Notions of Mankind concerning Good and Evil. We are certain, if a Revelation fails in any one or more of these, that it is false, and not of Divine Inspiration: For the Light of Nature, and a true and right Notion of Things, are from God; and to suppose a Revelation to be opposite to these, is to make God contradict himself. Thus if we understand any Thing, we know God to be infinitely Good and Holy, worthy of the profoundest and most solemn Adoration, because of the Perfections of his Nature, and his good Will and Beneficence to Mankind. And therefore to sacrifice Men and Children, and to mingle the most Impure and Ludicrous Practices with the Worship paid to him, is rather an Offering to be presented to the most Beastly and Savage *Demons*, than the Holy and Merciful Creator of all Things; and consequently cannot be of his Institution. In this Case, a Contradiction in the Nature of Things, would be like a Contradiction in Terms, or a

Sermon
III.

Contradiction in the Revelation it self: And therefore a Revelation that shall evidently contradict them, is a Revelation in Pretence only, it is not Divine.

But though these are thus necessary to Revelation, that the Want of them is sufficient to detect what is false; yet however it will not follow, That wherever these are [*viz.* that because a Sum of Doctrine agrees with it self, is consonant to the Light of Nature, and the right Notion we have of Things] that it is therefore of Divine Revelation. For though it is seldom but the Imposture fails in one or more of these, yet it may have all these Characters, and be a Doctrine of Men, of human Contrivance and Composition.

And therefore there is somewhat farther requisite to the Proof of a Revelation, somewhat peculiar to it, and that so belongs to it, as not to be common to any Thing with it.

And that is a Point I shall now take into Consideration. Toward the clearer Proof of which, I shall distribute it after a Threefold Manner.

1. I shall consider the Case of such as were themselves inspired, and to whom the Revelation was made, and how they could be satisfied of the Truth of such a Revelation.

2. The Case of those that received the Matter revealed immediately from the Persons inspired, and how they were to judge of the Truth of such a Revelation.

3. The

3. The Case of those that lived in Ages remote from that of the Inspired Persons, and after that the Revelation was compleated, (as was the Case of the *Jews* more especially that lived between the Time of *Malachi*, and *John* the Baptist; and as the Case is of all Christians since the Apostolical Times) and what Satisfaction and Evidence may there be expected in those Circumstances?

1. The Case of those that received the Revelation; and how they themselves could be satisfied about the Certainty of such a Revelation.

The Resolution of this Point belongs in Part to the Third General, under which the Difference remains to be shewed between a Revelation and Imagination. But I shall not wholly refer it thither.

There seems to be so near an Affinity between Revelation and Imagination; and Imagination is so far operative in many Branches of Inspiration, that it is very difficult to set out the Bounds exactly, and to say, This is of Divine Inspiration, and this the Effect of Fancy.

But whatever it may seem to us that have no Sensation or Experience of such Divine Representations as the Prophets had; and so 'tis no more possible for us to describe it, than 'tis for one that never had his Sight, to conceive what Light and Colour is: Yet as the Blind Man may be convinced that there are such Things as Light, Colour, Figure,

~
Sermon
III.

and Sight, by what he hears and observes from those that are about him, and that he converses with: So we may be as well assured that there was in Prophetical Schemes that powerful Representation on the Part of the Divine Agent, and that Clearness of Perception on the Part of the Person Inspired, as would abundantly make good those Phrases of *Vision* and *Speaking*, by which it is described in Scripture; and which may well be supposed as much more to Advantage, as the Power that operated upon them was beyond that of mere Imagination. So that those Inspired Persons, after such Illumination, might as well question what they heard or saw by the Natural Organs of Sense, as doubt of what was revealed to them by the Impressions made upon them through the Agency of the Divine Spirit.

To deny this, is to deny that God can so communicate himself to an Intelligent Creature, that the Creature shall certainly know that it proceeds from his immediate Suggestion; which I have before shewed it is unreasonable to question: And indeed what is no more to be questioned or denied, because we our selves have no Experience of it, than the Blind from their Birth can reasonably question or deny there is what we call Light and Colour; or the Deaf, that there are Sounds, Voices, and Words, because they have no Notion or Idea of these Things. Now if we think it reasonable, that the Deaf
and

and the Blind should, notwithstanding a Natural Inaptitude and Incapacity in themselves, assent to what all Mankind besides do unanimously aver, and not call in question the Truth or Possibility of what is thus affirmed, because of their Want of Sensation: So it is not fit or reasonable to think this Way of Revelation never was, and cannot be, because we ourselves have not an experimental Knowledge of such a Manifestation.

For Almighty God can so clarify the Understanding by a Beam of Light let in from above, as shall be a evident a Proof of its Divine Original, as it is that the Light proceeds from the Sun, the Fountain of it; or as a Person himself is sure of the Truth of any Proposition, which by an Argument before unthought of, or unconsider'd, he comes to be fully convinced of, in spite of all former Prejudices and Opinions.

So little Truth or Reason is there in a bold Assertion of a certain Author, That *Revelation is uncertain, and never certain without a sign*: And therefore, saith he, *Abraham, Moses, and Gideon*, asked a Sign, over and above Revelation. Theol. Polit. c. 2.

But it is far from being true, that those Persons therefore desired a Sign, because they conceived the Revelation to be uncertain, or that they doubted of the Truth of it; but as a Sign was for the greater Confirmation of their Faith, in some Points difficult to be believed, or in some very difficult Services,
(for

 Sermon
III.

(for Faith, as other Graces, is capable of Addition and Improvement). In which Cases, their asking a Sign is no more an Evidence of their Distrust of God, or a doubting of the Truth and Certainty of the Revelation, than God's confirming his Promise by an Oath, was an Evidence that he thought not his Word sufficient without it; or than *Abraham* could be supposed not obliged to believe upon a Promise alone, without that superabundant Confirmation of an Oath, *Heb. 6. 17.*

Thus it was even in the Case of that Holy Patriarch, to which this Author refers; where, before ever he asked a Sign, he is said to have so believed in the Lord, that it was *counted to him for righteousness*, *Gen. 15. 6, 8.* his Faith was highly commended, and he is for that Reason called, *the father of the faithful.*

So that Revelation may be certain when there is no Sign; and the Person was bound to believe it, and was obliged by it, as well where there was no Sign, as where there was.

I grant when Revelation comes at second hand to a Person, and rests on Human Testimony, on the Ability and Sincerity of the Relater, or Person supposed to be inspired, there needs some farther Evidence, some Sign or Signs that are to be, as it were, the Credentials from Heaven; since *all men are liars*, *Psal. 116. 11.* that is, may be deceived, or may deceive; may either be

so weak as to be imposed upon by their own Imagination, or the Imposture and Practices of Evil Spirits; or be so wicked, as, under the Pretence of Revelation and Inspiration, to impose upon others. In such a Case, no Man's Affirmation or Pretence is ordinarily to be heeded, further than as he is able to produce such Testimonies as are really as Divine as he would have his Revelation accounted to be.

Sermon
III.

But when a Person is himself the Recipient to whom the Revelation is imparted, there is no absolute need of a Sign or further Evidence to ascertain the Truth of it to him; when, if God so pleases, the Revelation of it self might be made as clear as it could be made by the Sign. What need is there of a Sign to prove that it is Day, when by the Light of it we see every Thing about us? Or to justify the Truth of a self-evident Proposition? These are Things in their own Nature that need no Proof. And when a Revelation has an Evidence of its own, as Truth has, it needs no other Light to discover it, no further Sign to prove it, for its own Sake, and as to the Person to whom the Revelation is made. A Sign therefore makes no Alteration in the Evidence; for whether with a Sign, or without a Sign, the Revelation is to be believed; for else they that had a Revelation without a Sign, were not obliged to believe, and the Revelation without the Sign had in Effect been

The Characters of

been no Revelation ; since no one is obliged to believe, where there is no Reason for it ; and there is no Reason for it, where there is no Evidence, or that Evidence not sufficient.

So that if it be asked, how a Person shall himself be satisfied concerning the Certainty of a Revelation made to him, it will receive the same Answer with that, How he shall be satisfied concerning the Truth of a Proposition, or a self-evident Proposition ; for the further Proof of which God may work a Miracle, and give a Sign, but the Thing is the Proof of it self.

But however, suppose a Person never so well satisfied in what he calls Revelation, and that in his own Opinion he is as sure of it as of his own Being and Existence ; yet what is this to others, that are concern'd in that Revelation, if it be true, and as much bound to believe it, and be directed by it, as if they themselves had been in the Place of that inspired Person, and received it, as he did, immediately from God ?

This brings us to the Second Case.

2. The Case of those that did not themselves receive that Revelation immediately from God, but from the Person or Persons inspired : And then the Question is, How these are to judge of the Truth of that Revelation ?

Divine Revelation.

93

Sermon
III.

A Revelation to another, how evidently and convincingly soever it may be represented to him, is nothing to me, unless I am fully assured that he has had such a Revelation: But that I cannot be assur'd of, unless it be by the like immediate Revelation, or by sufficient and uncontrollable Testimony. But it would be an unreasonable Motion to demand that we be alike inspired, and have the same Revelation to confirm his Revelation; for that would be as if one that was born blind should obstinately refuse to believe there is a Sun in the Firmament, or Day, or Sight, unless he has the same Visive Faculty with those that do affirm it. It might then as reasonably be required with *Thomas*, that we see the Print of the Nails, and put our Hand into the Side, and have all actually brought home to our Senses, or else we will remain Infidels, and not believe. This would be to drive all Faith out of the World, and so it would be unpracticable.

We must then take the Case for granted, and that it is as reasonable for us to believe, where there are sufficient Motives of Credibility, as if we were alike actually inspired as they to whom the Revelation was immediately conveyed.

And here let us place our selves in those Circumstances, as if we were to judge of the Truth or Falshood of a Revelation; and consider what we our selves would in reason desire

desire for our own Satisfaction, when the Persons to whom this Revelation is made, stand ready to give it. And if I mistake not in judging for others by what I my self would desire, it may be resolved,

1. Into the Veracity, Sincerity, and Credibility of the Persons pretending to Inspiration.

2. Into the Matter or Subject of Revelation.

3. Into the Testimony produced for it.

1. The Credibility of the Person; by which we understand his Probity and Sincerity; his Capacity, Prudence, and Understanding, which render him worthy of Credit, and are meet and necessary Qualifications for a Divine Missionary. The being a Prophet to others, (as those are to whom a Revelation is made, and that are inspired by Almighty God) so as to teach and direct them, in the Stead, as it were, of God, whose Mouth and Representatives they are unto the People, is an Office of great Dignity, and requires somewhat of the Divine Image, as well as Authority, to recommend them and their Message to others; and therefore Prophets and Holy Men are in Scripture frequently put together, 2 Pet. i. 21. Matth. 13. 17. implying that none were fit to be employed in so sacred an Office, that were not Persons of

known

known Probity, and approv'd Integrity. I grant in the ordinary Cases, as there were Prophets bred up in the Schools or Nurseries of Learning and Morality, there might be such Persons as were employ'd without a strict Regard had to these Qualifications, as Messengers that carry'd an Errand by the Order of their Superior; as *2 Kings 9. 1.* I grant again, that God might and did sometimes, upon some Occasions, inspire such Persons as had none of these Qualifications to recommend them; as he did *Balaam*: But then this was no more than when God open'd the Mouth of the Ass, to *rebuke the Madness of that Prophet*; and who was so over-rul'd by the Divine Power, as against his Will to bless those whom he came to curse; which was so much the more considerable, as it was the Testimony of an Enemy.

Sermon
III.

But as Revelation is a Divine Communication, and a Mark of Divine Favour, so it doth suppose, in the Nature of it, that the Person so dignified is duly qualified for it; and which is so requisite in the Opinion of Mankind, that without it he would rather be accounted an Impostor, than a Messenger from God, and ordinarily have no more Reverence paid to his Errand, than to his Person.

And what has been thus said in general, as to the Morality and Virtue of Persons inspir'd, will hold in some Degree as to their Prudence and Understanding, which is so necessary

~
Sermon
III.

Theol. Po-
lit. c. 5.

necessary a Qualification, that the Divine Election of Persons for so peculiar a Service, doth in that way either find or make them fit.

It is no wonder that a late Author maintains Revelation to be uncertain, when he saith, That the Prophets were not endued with a more perfect understanding than others, but only with a more Vivid Power of Imagination; and that the Wisest of Men, such as *Solomon*, *Heman*, &c. were not Prophets, but, contrariwise, Rusticks, and untaught Persons, and even despicable Women, such as *Hagar*.

For if these, and such as these, were the only Persons employ'd in the Messages of Heaven to Mankind, and whom all the Revelation center'd in, there would be no improbable Grounds of Suspicion that they were misled into such an Opinion, by the Fascination of a working Imagination, and so it would be Fancy, and not Revelation.

But what thinks he of *Moses*, a Person acquainted with all the Learning of the *Egyptians*, and richly accomplish'd with all Endowments requisite to compleat a Governor of a Numerous People, and to consolidate them into a settled Constitution; and therefore has the Preference given him to all the most Famous and Ancient Law-givers, by *Plato*, *Pythagoras*, *Diodorus Siculus*, &c. What thinks he of *Joshua*, that was bred up under the best Instructor, and that knew the Art of Government, and Conduct in

Peace

Peace and War? What of *Samuel*, that from his Youth, and even Childhood indeed, commenced a Prophet, and was also the Judge of the whole Nation in unsettled and perilous Times, *Acts* 3. 24. 13. 20.? What of *David*, justly called a Prophet, *Acts* 2. 30. and whose Writings shew him to excell in all Manner of Poetry, and sublime Compo-
sures? What, lastly, of *Solomon* himself, to whom, it's said, the Lord appeared twice, *1 Kings* 11. 9. in a more eminent Manner; and at other Times, *1 Kings* 3. 5. 6. 12. 9. 2. 11. 11.? And if at other Times God (who is not confined in his Choice or Operations to the Capacity of Instruments) was pleased to reveal himself to, and employ such Rusticks and illiterate Persons as *Amos*, and afterward the Apostles, he gave them *a mouth and wisdom*, *Luke* 21. 15. and endued them with such extraordinary Gifts of Elocution and Magnanimity, as made them fit to appear before Kings, and to confront the Wifest of Philosophers, so as that of the Apostle was abundantly verified in them, *1 Cor.* 1. 25, &c. That *the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men, &c.*

But it is not only requisite that the Persons to whom the Revelation is made, and that are employ'd in delivering that Revelation to others, be wise and cautious, such as are capable of discerning, and not apt to be imposed upon; but it is as requisite that they

H

be

~
Sermon
III.

be Faithful and Sincere, and that will not impose upon others. For otherwise the more knowing they are, the more able are they by plausible Insinuations and Pretences to deceive. And what greater Evidence of this can be desired, than when the Persons Inspired live by the best Rules, as well as give them? What greater Evidence, than when for the sake of publishing, propagating, and confirming the Truth of what they teach, they deny themselves of all the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this present Life; when though they knew before hand, that *bonds and tribulation abide them, yet none of these things move them, neither count they their lives dear unto them*; but with admirable Patience, Resolution, and Constancy, expose themselves to the utmost Severities, for the Hope of such Reward as they propose for their own, and the Encouragement of others? What greater Testimonies can be given of their Sincerity, and if not of the Truth, yet of their own Belief of it? Who could with such Chearfulness invite the greatest Dangers, and with such a brave Magnanimity despise all the Threatnings of the most Potent Adversaries, and run the Gantelope, as it were, through the most formidable Persecutions, without the least Demur or Hæsitati-
 on, if they themselves were not abundantly and fully convinced of the Truth, Excellency, and Necessity of that Doctrine they were thus commissioned to teach? If
 these

Divine Revelation.

99

Sermon
III.

these are not sincere, there is no Sincerity in the World.

So that as far as the Credibility of the Persons is a Proof of a Revelation; and so far as the Wisdom, Probity, and Sincerity of Persons, are a Proof of their Credibility; we have an Evidence to rest upon, and a Character to try the Truth of a Revelation by.

The 2d Proof in this Case, desirable and necessary toward a Satisfaction, is the Subject-Matter of it; I mean that which runs as is a Vein through the whole Body of Revelation. There are some Revelations which concern particular Persons or Families, as that of the Angel to *Hagar* concerning *Ishmael* and his Posterity, which neither made her a Prophet, nor were strictly of Concernment to the rest of the World. But when we enquire after the Matter of Revelation, it is principally the main Subject of it, such as the Law of *Moses* in the Old Testament, and the Gospel in the New.

And here it may be reasonably expected, that the Revelation should be worthy of God, as it is a Revelation from him; and what should be for the Advantage, Satisfaction, and Happiness of Mankind, as it is a Revelation to them.

It is to be worthy of God, and what would become him to speak, dictate, and do, if he were himself to speak, dictate,

~
Sermon
III.

and act. In all Relations and Descriptions there is a certain Decorum to be observed, with respect to the Nature, Condition, and Circumstances of the Things related and described, which makes up what is call'd Symmetry and Proportion. But, above all, a due Regard is to be had hereunto, in the Ideas and Notions we entertain, or the Representations we make of God, that they may be agreeable to the Dignity and Perfections of his Nature. And if, in all our Conceptions of the Divine Being, such a scrupulous Care is to be taken that we judge not amiss of his Nature, Will, and Operations; we cannot but suppose that in the Revelation of himself to Mankind, he who best and only knows himself, will give such a Representation of those, as is suitable to his Majesty and Authority; and may ingenerate in the Minds of Men such an Awe, Reverence, and Regard, as is due from Finite, Created, and Imperfect Beings, to him that is Infinite, Uncreated, and in all Points absolutely Perfect. There we may well expect to find the most lively Characters of the Divine Perfections, as far as we are capable of conceiving; where Justice and Power are set forth in all their Authority, and yet so temper'd with his Mercy and Kindness, as shall as well raise and quicken the Hopes, attract the Love, and establish the Comfort of Good Men, as administer Matter of just Terror to the Wicked. There we may suppose

Divine Revelation.

101

Sermon
III.

pose the Mysteries of the Divine Counsels unlocked, and the Beauties and Harmony of the Divine Providence illustrated and described, as far as God's Government of the World, and the Condition of Mankind in it will permit. There we may expect to find the best Principles, Rules, and Precepts, to inform and direct us in what we are to know and do; the best Arguments and Motives for our Encouragement, and the best Means for the purifying and the Perfecting of our Natures, and the making us as happy as we are capable; and which shall as much exceed what we find in the Moralists, as Revelation is above Nature, and the Dictates of Almighty God are beyond the Prescripts of Human Wisdom. Such, in fine, as will lead us to God, make us like him, and fit us for the Enjoyment of him. So that as much as Virtue makes for the Good, Perfection and Happiness of Men, so much should Revelation make for the Practice of Virtue by its Principles and Rules, its Precepts, and its Arguments.

Lastly, There we may expect to be satisfied about the chief Subjects of Human Enquiry, of what Mankind would not only desire, but what is best and most necessary for them to know. And what is there more Material, and of greater Importance, than to be satisfied about the Origine of all Things, and how they came at first to be? What more desirable, then since God is infinitely

~
Sermon
III.

Good, and consequently could produce nothing that is in it self Evil, than to know how the Nature of Mankind came to be corrupted; and that where there is such a clear Sense of the Difference between Good and Evil, such Convictions following that Sense, such Memento's, and such Presignifications, such Reflections upon it, that there should be such a Potent Sway, Bent and Propension to Evil, that with all their Care it can never be prevented, or totally exterminated?

What more desirable, than to know what Nature and Reason of it self is insufficient, for [when we can get no further than a *Vide meliora probaque*, &c. in the Apostle's Language, *The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do*] may be otherwise effected; that these Inclinations may be subdued, and Nature brought to a Regular State?

What more desirable, than to know how, after all, God may be appeased, Forgiveness may be obtained, and that heavy Load upon Human Nature, arising from the Guilt of a Man's Mind, may be removed?

Lastly, What more desirable, than to know the Certainty and Condition of a Future State, and how we may attain to the Happiness of it?

These, and the like, used to be the Prime Questions which all, and especially the most thoughtful and considerate Part of Mankind sought, but in vain, for Satisfaction in.

And

And therefore since Revelation is to make up the Defects of Natural Light, and is as well for the Satisfaction of Mankind, as to be worthy of God, we may reasonably expect that these should be the chief Subject of such Revelation.

And a Revelation without this, that should leave Mankind in the same Circumstances of Ignorance and Dissatisfaction as they were in before such Revelation, is no more to be esteem'd, than that Course of Physick, which, after all Pretences to Infallibility, leaves a Person as much under the Power of his Disease, as before he followed those Prescriptions; It is no Revelation, and can have no Pretence to such a Venerable Title.

But when the Subject is Great, Noble, and Sublime, thus worthy of God, and thus beneficial to Mankind: When there is an exact Concord between the Principles of Nature and Reason, and that all falls in with the true and just Notion we have of Things: When there is an Harmony through the whole, we have good Reason to say, This, if any, is the Revelation.

And as far as these Characters belong to Revelation, so much Reason have we to believe the Matter of Scripture to be such; as I shall afterwards shew, when I come to examine the Revelation of Scripture by these Characters.

3. It would be very desirable toward the Confirmation of a Revelation, and for the

~
Sermon
III.

Satisfaction of those that are required to believe it, that there be an Evidence and Testimony as Extraordinary, as the Matter Revealed is, and the Authority it rests upon; such as the one is, such in Reason ought the other to be: And that is Divine Attestation. A Divine Attestation I account that to be, which exceeds the Power, and is out of the Road of Nature; for Nothing less can change the Course, and alter the Law of Nature, but that which is above Nature, and gave Law to it; and it must be somewhat above Nature, that can be a sufficient Witness to what is Supernatural. And this may justly be required to justify the Truth of a Revelation, and to distinguish it from Enthusiasm and Imposture. For when the Case is such as *Moses* puts it, *Exod. 4. 1, &c. They will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice; for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee*; there needs somewhat beyond a bare Affirmation, to support the Credit of the Revelation, and the Authority of him that pretends to it. And accordingly he was endued with a Power of working Miracles, *That, saith the Text, they may believe that the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, hath appeared to thee*. A Sort of Evidence (as that implies) that is very necessary, and what may reasonably be demanded; and which is a Proof of the highest Nature, and what as all ordinarily can judge of, being a Matter of Sense, so where it is true, what we are to be concluded by.

The
J. H. G.

The first Thing then required, and to be considered, is the Reality of the Thing, That there is such an Alteration in the Course and State of Nature, which our own Senses will inform us in. The next Thing is, That this Alteration cannot proceed from any Natural or Created Cause; (for that would be to set Nature above it self.) The last Thing is, That this Alteration in Nature is brought about for such an End, and is solely for the Sake of that Revelation, and to give Testimony to it.

Where this is, there is the Finger of God, and an Infallible Proof of the Truth and Certainty of what it is to witness to.

Now let us lay all this together, and see what it amounts to; *viz.* The Capacity, Ability, and Integrity of the Persons to whom this Revelation is made; the Unanimity and Consent of Persons remote and distant in Time and Place; the Usefulness and Reasonableness, the Excellency, Sublimity, and Perfection of the Doctrine they taught; the Testimony given to them by such Operations and Productions as exceed the Power of Created Causes, and are wholly from the Supreme. Where these are concurring, and with one Mouth, as it were, giving in their Evidence, we may say it is the Voice of God, and that it is his Revelation which carries upon it the conspicuous Stamp of his Authority. For God cannot be supposed to bear witness to a Falshood,

~
Sermon
III.

a Falshood, and to set up that as a Light to direct Men in their Enquiry, which is no other than an *Ignis Fatuus*, and tends to their unavoidable Amusement and Deception.

But supposing those that were Coteemporaries with Inspired Persons, had all these concurring Evidences for their Satisfaction, yet what is this to those that live in Times distant and remote from them, and have it only by Tradition of Persons uninspired; or as contain'd in certain Books said to be wrote by Persons inspired?

This brings me to the last Point; which is,

3. The Case of those that live in After-Ages, when Inspiration is not pretended to, and Miracles have ceased, and so want those Advantages for their Satisfaction, which they that were coetaneous with Inspired Persons might receive; and yet being obliged alike to believe as the other, must be supposed to have sufficient Authority and Proof for what they are to believe. And then the Question is, What is that Evidence which will be sufficient for them to ground their Belief upon?

I answer, 1. That if such have all the Evidence that can be in their Circumstances, they have what is sufficient, and what is to be presumed necessary. The Evidence is sufficient, if it proves there were Persons so inspired;

Inspired ; that in Confirmation of it, they wrought Miracles ; and that those Persons wrote certain Books which contain the Records of those Revelations and Miracles ; and which Books are the same that now go under their Name.

And if they have all the Evidence for this that in their Circumstances can be reasonably demanded, they have that which is sufficient. And what Evidence can be given of Matters transacted 1600 Years ago, but Testimony, and what is usually called Moral Evidence ? A way of Proof that is as certain as that we our selves were born, and born of such Parents, at such a time ; and that there is any such Thing as Faith and Trust in Mankind.

2. Though these of After-Ages want the Evidence those Cotemporaries of Inspired Persons had ; yet they have some Advantages above them. For they have not only the concurrent Evidence of all before them, and the Reasons of their Judgment that have been downwards from those Times, the most considerable Part of Mankind for Wisdom and impartial Consideration ; but having lived to see the whole Scheme of Revelation compleated, and at once placed in their View,

1. They can by that means compare one Part with the other, and see how all agrees, and makes up one entire and coherent Body,

2. They

The Characters of

2. They can compare the Events already pass'd, with the Predictions, and see how all came on, and in their Season are fulfilled, and how the former is still confirm'd by the latter. In all which, there appears an admirable Contrivance of the Divine Prescience, in describing those Things so long beforehand, and of the Divine Wisdom and Power in carrying on the Prophetick Line through all the Stages of Second Causes, and an Infinite Variety of Events, to the last Moment of its Accomplishment; and to all which, a watchful Providence of the Almighty must constantly attend.

3. They have seen the wonderful Success of the Gospel in Verification of Prophecy; and notwithstanding all the Opposition made to it by the Power and Interest of the World, back'd with the Venom, Spite, and Malice of inveterate Enemies.

4. They have seen the Wonderful Preservation of it through all the various Scenes of Prosperity and Adversity; and how miraculously it has been restored out of the lowest Abyss, when seemingly, and as to all outward Appearance, beyond Recovery.

So that we see, how in every Case there are Ways chalked out for our Satisfaction in this Argument of a Divine Revelation; the Case of Latter Ages not excepted.

And therefore that Unbelief is now as inexcusable after the Times of Revelation, as in those Times. We are apt to think, and
 some-

Sometimes to plead, That if we had lived in the Apostolical Age, when the Revelation was attended with the irrefragable Testimony of many Glorious Miracles, we should then have been inexcusable, if we had remained incredulous amidst those Instances of the Divine Power, or impenitent under the Force of such convincing Arguments; and that the want of these may justly be pleaded for our Excuse. But this is much like those *Jews*, *Matth. 23, 30.* that said, *If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets*; when yet they were acted by the same Spirit. And I may say, Those that believe not now under all the Motives of Credibility, would not have believ'd, any more than the *Jews* did, that were Eye and Ear-Witnesses of our Saviour's Miracles and Doctrine, and yet remained to the last Incredulous. Such are incurable; for if they hear not *Moses* and the Prophets, the Testimonies yet remaining, neither would they be persuaded, though Christ and the Apostles rose from the dead, and the whole process of that Testimony given by them, was afresh represented to them. The best Man is the best Judge; and the better he is, the more capable he is of Judging; according to that memorable Saying of our Saviour, *John 7. 17.* *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my self.*

Where-


Sermon
III.

Wherefore (to conclude with that of the
Apostle, James 1. 21.) lay apart all filthiness
and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with
meekness [and humility] the ingrafted word,
which is able to save your Souls. But be ye do-
ers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving
your own selves.

SER-

SERMON IV.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.

IN these Words, there is contain'd, (as I have before shewed)

I. A Description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking.*

II. The *Certainty* of it ; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, &c.*

III. The Order observed in delivering this Revelation ; it was *at sundry times, &c.*

IV. The Perfection and Conclusion of all, 'tis *in these last days by his Son.*

Under

The Truth of

Under the Second I have shewed,

1. That God has actually revealed his Will at sundry times, and in divers manners.
2. What are the Characters of true Revelation.
3. I am now in order to prove, that the Scriptures of the *Old* and *New Testament* do contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

For the better disposing of what I have to say under this Head of Discourse, I shall observe,

1. 'Tis one Thing to assert and prove the Matter of Scripture to be true, and another to prove it to be of Divine Revelation.
2. 'Tis one Thing to prove the Matter of Scripture to be of Divine Revelation, and another to prove these Books to be of Divine Inspiration.
3. 'Tis one Thing to assert that there were once such Books so inspired; and another Thing to prove this Set of Books, which now make up and compose the Canon of the *Old* and *New Testament*, to be those very Books.

From hence arise four Questions, *viz.*

Quest. 1. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be true?

2. 2. How

Q. 2. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be of Divine Revelation? Books of mere Human Composition may contain nothing but Truth, without any Supernatural Assistance; and therefore though we were never so well able to maintain and prove the Truth of the Matter, that is not sufficient, unless we can advance higher, and prove the Authority and Divinity of the Matter.

Q. 3. How we can prove those Books to be of Divine Inspiration? The Epistle of *Clemens Romanus* was sometime read in the Church (as the *Apocrypha* anciently was, and is now with us), because of the Excellency and Profitableness of the Matter; but yet it was not esteemed to be Canonical, and of immediate Inspiration from God.

Q. 4. How we prove these Books, that are now extant, and received by the Christian Church as Canonical, to be those Books which were once in time past wrote by Inspiration from God?

It will be of some Use to us in the Prosecution of this Argument, to consider the first Question, concerning the Truth of the Matter of Scripture, by it self, and apart from the Divine Authority of it.

Now the Matter of Scripture is of various Nature, such as Morality, Doctrinal Revelation, Institution, Prophecy and History, of which, the greatest Part will be here set

~
Sermon
IV.

aside: For it is not necessary to prove the Truth of the Moral Part of it, which is no other than the Dictate of Nature; and therefore, though explain'd, confirm'd, and illustrated in Scripture by many useful Rules, Principles and Observations, needs no Proof.

That of Doctrine and Institution, falls in with the Divine Authority, and so belongs to the Second Question.

Prophecy, if yet to be accomplish'd, is not capable of other Proof than Revelation; and if already fulfilled, by the Event following, and correspondent to the Prediction, it is the Proof of it self.

So that the Part now remaining to be proved more especially, is Scripture-History; which is a Relation of Matter of Fact, of what has happened, been declared, or done in the several Periods and Ages of the World for Four thousand Years together, and upwards.

Under which Notion, I do not question but it may be made appear, That there is more to be said for the Truth of Scripture-History, than for any thing of that kind in the whole World.

I don't question again, but it may be made appear, that no Authors had greater Advantages for Information, in the Subjects they treat of; nor were there ever any Writings that bore upon them more ample Marks of Ability, Impartiality, and Care. So that if after all *that* is to be suspected,
nothing

nothing of that Kind is certain, and we call in question all Matters of the like nature whatsoever.

Sermon
IV.

But this is further to be inquired into.

Now of this Kind, there are some Things, to be found only in Scripture, and no where else. In which Case we have no other way to judge of the Truth of it, than by the Credibility of the Matter, the Self-Agreement, its Concordance with Time, Place, and other Circumstances of Action, together with the Credit and Reputation of the Pen-men of it.

But there are other Things which fall in with other Writings; and then besides the former way of Trial, we are to have recourse to such Books, to compare them, and determine concerning the Truth by such a Comparison.

So that we have Three Sorts of Proof before us, or so many Characters by which we may judge concerning the Truth of what the Scripture relates: *Viz.*

1. The Credibility of the Matter therein revealed.
2. Self-Consistence, and Self-Agreement.
3. Its Concordance with other Books of good and sufficient Authority; where such there are.

~
 Sermon
 IV.

And if this be made out, we have as much Evidence for the Truth of Scripture as is possible to have in our Circumstances; and where the Matters related were transacted in Place and Time far remote from us. For all the Evidence we can have, is to be resolved into Testimony, and that Testimony into the Credibility of the Relators, or of the Matters related: And if we have as much Evidence of this kind as the nature of the Thing will bear and admit, we have as much as is reasonable in it self, and sufficient to ground a Certainty upon. For according as the Nature of the Thing is, and the Ground upon which its Proof and Evidence depends, such is the Certainty: And as in Things Mathematical, Demonstration is the Proof; And in Things Natural and Sensible, Sense is the Proof; and in Things Rational and Moral, Reason and Argument are the Proof; so in Matters of Fact (where we our selves are not present) Testimony and Records are the Proof; though, for a further Confirmation of it, there is the collateral Proof of Moral Evidence, *viz.* the Credibility of the Matter, and the Persons, into whose Testimony and Veracity the Matters are finally resolved. And beyond this we cannot go, in the Evidence for the Truth of the Matters of Fact; and consequently, if we have this Evidence, we have as great a Certainty in Things of this Nature, as Demonstration is in Things Mathe-

the Holy Scriptures.

117

Mathematical, and Sense in Things sensible ; I say, beyond this we cannot go, unless we advance to Supernatural Evidence ; but that belongs not to this Place.


Sermon
IV.

So that here we have no Reason to doubt ; and where there is no Reason to doubt, there is Certainty. And if we can be certain of any Thing we our selves have not seen, or been present at, we may be certain of what is recorded in the Scripture : Since there is no Evidence for any thing of that Kind, which we have not for the Truth of Scripture ; and I may say, we have that Evidence for it, which no Matters of Fact besides have. If then there be any Certainty in such Things, if any Credit be to be given to them ; then there is here a sufficient Evidence to ground that Certainty, and our Belief of it upon : And if there be no Certainty in them, and no Ground to believe them ; then there is no Certainty in the World, and no Credit to be given to whatever is, or has been allowed by others in the World : Then there is no more Credit to be given to the Commentaries of *Cæsar*, (which he wrote himself) nor to the Histories of the Four Empires, nay to those of our own Nation, than there is to *Achilles*, *Tatius*, or *Heliodorus*, than to the vainest Romances, the Fables of Poets, or the Legends of the most Superstitious and Credulous Ages of the World.

And with all our Histories, though ne-

~
Sermon
IV.

ver so famed, and commonly receiv'd, we are in no better a Condition, than if *Varro's fabulous and obscure Age* had been continued, and all the Ages were now this Day what it was before the *Olympiads*, wrapt up in Invention and Conjecture.

But if there be any Credit to be given to such Memorials, and that we read approved Histories with another sort of Appetite and Assurance than we do Fables; and that we read *Lucan* (a Poetical Historian) with another sort of Relish than *Ovid's Metamorphoses*; then the like Credit is to be given to the Scriptures as to any; and so much the more, as the Evidence proper to its Kind is beyond the Evidence we have for any other Writings whatsoever.

And this I shall undertake and prosecute, by proving,

1. That the Scripture has sufficient Evidence of that Kind to ground a Certainty upon.
2. That it has all the Evidence that any Writings or Matters of this Kind have, and more.

In order to which, it may well serve as an Introduction to what is to follow, briefly to reflect upon the Writers themselves, and their Qualifications; upon whose Credit and Authority there must be confessedly sometimes an absolute Reliance. Since the

Rela-

Relators of Matters of Fact profess not to write out of their own Heads, but to receive what they write from a constant and uninterrupted Tradition, or to collect from the best Records and Memorials, or to set down what is of their own Knowledge and Observation: And therefore the Reputation of their Reports and Narratives doth very much depend upon their Skill and Judgment, that they be not abused by false Informations, and upon their Honesty and Integrity in not putting Abuses upon the World.

As for the Ways of Information, there is nothing of that Kind wanting in the Sacred Pen-men. For the first Writer, *Moses*, lived so near upon the Traditionary Age, and the Things he writes of are of such a Nature, as may well be supposed to be deliver'd down without any Difficulty from Progenitors to Posterity, had there been no other Means of Conveyance; and especially (as has been before suggested, *Sermon II.*) if we consider the few Hands they were to pass through, when at the most Eight Persons only in Succession continued the Line above Two thousand five hundred Years, from the Deluge to the Time of *Moses*; and that the Matters were such as all those held themselves concerned to deliver them down as they had received them. Forasmuch as all the Prophecies they had received, which concerned the good of Mankind, and of their Posterity, depended upon the careful and

~
Sermon
IV.

faithful Preservation of these Memorials; both as to Time and Pedigrees, as well as the Matters which the Series of Times and Descents were to be the great Supporters of.

From hence it was afterwards that these Chronological Tables, and Genealogical Rolls, were in all Times exactly kept, and which upon Occasion they might have recourse to; and that there were Annals in future Ages that were look'd upon as Sacred Repositories; and from whence the Holy Writers drew their Materials, and to which they do refer, as may be observed in the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*.

But if we add hereunto, that a great Part of what is the Subject of of Holy Writ, was what the Writers themselves had the Personal Knowledge of, bore a part in, and what happen'd in their own Times; it gives the greater Authority to what they have written. And this was the Case of *Moses* as to the Four last of his Books; of *Joshua*, of *Samuel*, of the Prophets, and of the Evangelical Writers. So that if we will grant any Thing to be allowed to Tradition, to Records of Ages, to Reports of Eye and Ear-Witnesses, there is the highest Credit to be given to the Divine Authors, in what they have collected and made Report of. And what has been done with so much Faithfulness, Impartiality, and Judgment, (as their Composures testify) that even that which tends to the Disparagement of their Nation
and

and Ancestors, their Families and Persons, is not conceal'd, when it might tend to the Glory of God, to the Manifestation of the Reasons of the Divine Proceedings towards them, or the giving any Life to the Matters they relate. A Practice rarely to be observed in other Authors ; and when it is, doth give Credit to what they report.

But the chief Thing is the Credibility of the Matter (which I shall now proceed to).

I. The Credibility of the Matter, which is a standing Character that we are to judge of the Truth of a Relation by.

But then we must judge aright concerning the Credibility of it. For that at first Sight may seem to be incredible, which upon farther Consideration and Examination may prove to be Credible : As St. Paul saith to Agrippa, Acts 26. 8. *Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?* It might seem a Thing incredible at the first Proposal, as it did to the Athenians, Acts 17. 32. but the Apostle states the Case right, 1. Cor. 15. 35. in Answer to that Question, *Some Man will say, How are the dead raised up, and with what Body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickned except it dye. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that Body that shall be, but God giveth it a Body, &c.* Where he first of all confirms it by a like Instance in Nature, and then resolves it into the Power of God.

'Tis

~
Sermon
IV.

'Tis for want of these Two Considerations, that is, of the Understanding of Nature, the Order, Power, and Operation of Second Causes; and of the Power of God, the Supreme Cause, that we often mistake about the Credibility of Things; and judge that to be Impossible and Incredible, which in it self, and often in the Event, proves to be Possible and Credible.

And thus it frequently fares in Matters of Fact, of the Credibility or Incredibility of which, we are as liable to mistake, as about the Possibility or Impossibility of Effects in Nature; when we judge of other Nations and Ages by our own, and of what we do not know, by what we do, and sometimes are so vain as to reason against others Experience and Observation. Thus it was with the Ancients, that thought the Torrid-Zone Uninhabitable; and with others, that accounted the Opinion of Antipodes Fabulous and Impossible. Hence it is that the Errors of former Writers are so often corrected by Modern Observations. But this we may confidently affirm of the Holy Scripture, that after it has stood the Test of above Three thousand Years in Whole or in Part, (for so long is it since the Time of *Moses*) and that nothing has been left unattempted by its Adversaries to overthrow its Authority, it has yet maintained it, so as to be the most Exact, Faithful, and Impartial Relation the World ever had.

For

the Holy Scriptures.

123

For the better judging of whose Veracity, and confirming its Credibility, we may observe;
Sermon
IV.

1. That a great Part of it carries with it its own Evidence, and has the common Consent of Mankind to attest it. Such I account the History of the Creation of the World, the Formation of Man, and the Degeneracy of Human Nature to be. The first of these was universally acknowledg'd; nor was the Creation of the World ever questioned or disputed, till above a thousand Years after the Time of *Moses* (as *Aristotle*, who was of that Opinion, acknowledges, *de Cælo*, lib. 1, cap. 10.) And the last was the Observation of all Ages.

2. There is a Relation of such Things in Scripture, as have in them the Face and Appearance of Truth; and of which, no certain or tolerable Account can be given by any other Monuments of History that are, or ever were extant in the World. Such are the Age of the World; the Dispersion of Nations; the Variety of Languages; the Distribution of Time, &c.

Now if the Account given of these Things in Scripture be True, we are capable of solving the greatest Difficulties as to these Matters. And that they are True, there is good Reason to conclude. As for Instance, let us consider the Instances before given,
viz.

(1.) The

~
Sermon
IV.

(1.) The Origine of the World as it is in *Genesis*. I acknowledge there may be nothing in the Composition of it, or in the Course of Nature, to determine this Point more in Favour of *Moses*, than of the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, or *Chinese*. But to lay aside all other Arguments from the Novelty of Arts and Sciences, and the reputed Inventors of them; it is certain that in the Account given by *Moses* there is an exact Order, the Narration begins and is carried on with a strict Coherence; and let us trace it back from the Flood to *Adam*; or from *Abraham* (suppose) to the Flood, there is a very regular Relation of Persons and Things. But besides the Incredibleity of the other, of the Thousands of the *Egyptians*, the Hundred thousands of the *Chaldeans*, and the Millions of the *Chinese*; it all ends at last in Fable, in Apotheoses, or imaginary Gods and Heroes, and Self-Contradictions (as has been shewn by many Learned Writers on this Argument).

(2.) As to the Dispersion of Nations, and the Consequents of it, the Pedigree of *Moses* is justified in the Names of Places agreeing with those of the Persons; as has been abundantly proved by *Bochart* in his *Geographia Sacra*. And which would appear to the Eye of every Reader, if a Table was made of the Tenth Chapter of *Genesis*, and compared with the Ancient Geography; and should have been here inserted, were there a Place for it.

(3.) As to the Distribution of Time,
there

there is an orderly Progression, both with Respect to the Genealogies of Families, and the several Periods from the Creation to the Flood, from thence to the Law at *Sinai*, from thence to the rearing of *Solomon's* Temple, from thence to the Captivity, and from that to our Saviour's Death. Time and Place are good Characters of the Truth of any Matter of Fact, as well as good Marks and Directors; and carry in them a great Appearance of Truth where they are to be found. And then none can be presumed to be more certain than the Scripture, where the Relation these had to the Messiah, and each Person had to his Tribe, and each Tribe to its Place and Scituation, made the *Jews* to be scrupulously Exact and Critical.

3. There are other Things that are highly Credible, and have nothing difficult to be admitted; and if admitted, are a wonderful Instance of the Divine Providence: As in the Punishment of profligate and incorrigible Wickedness, in the Two Notorious Examples of the Deluge and *Sodom*; 2 *Pet.* 2. 5, 6: So in the Preservation of Pious Persons, such as *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Lot*, *Joseph*, *David*, &c.

But above all is this, evident in God's erecting, establishing, guiding and preserving his Church, when in *Egypt*, in *Canaan*, though perpetually surrounded with watchful and malicious Adversaries; and recovering so much of it out of Captivity as was sufficient in a continued Succession to answer the End of accom-

Sermon
IV.

accomplishing all the Scripture Prophecies in the Person of the *Messiah*, that was to descend from the Lineage of *Abraham*, the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Family of *David*.

So that as the Ancient Genealogies, together with the Chronology of Scripture, were carefully recorded, to demonstrate to succeeding Generations that the World had a Beginning, and a late Beginning in Comparison: So the later Genealogies from *Abraham* were very exactly preserved, that so it might appear to all the World, that what had been foretold above 1800 Years before, was in its Order and Time punctually fulfilled: Which if the Genealogies had been lost or confounded, could not have been observed; and so we had been wanting in a considerable Evidence of the Descent of our Saviour, and consequently of his being the *Messiah*.

Indeed the whole Scripture History is little else than the History of Divine Providence; where there is an admirable Concatenation of Relations of various Kinds, but all subservient to the same End; and were there an Extract made of it, and all the Events therein rehearsed, and Operations therein described, brought into one entire Body, it would be the best Commentary on that Divine Subject in the whole World, and infinitely beyond any Human Composure.

4. There are other Things that are difficult, either as to the Relations themselves;

or the Manner and Circumstances of them; but what should no more prejudice us against the Truth and Certainty of the Things related, and much less of the Whole, than the Difficulties of Divine Providence should warrant us to deny it, and for want of not understanding some of its Operations, or Events, we should take Encouragement to deny what we do understand. 'Tis an excellent Saying of St. *Austin*, *De Doctrina*, l. 4. c. 6. (speaking of the Divine Writers) "Where I do understand them, there is nothing seems to me more wisely or more eloquently expressed: But where I do not understand them, there to me appears less of their Eloquence; but yet I do not doubt it to be such, as it is where I understand it.

Sermon
IV.

We ought rather to suspend our Censure with the Modesty of this Father, and for the sake of what we do understand, think the more favourably of what we do not.

And therefore, as when we have uncontrollable Reason to believe a Providence, the Difficulties about it are no sufficient Reason to call the Doctrine of Divine Providence into question: So when we have so great Reason to believe the Scripture's Relation of Things to be true, the Difficulties about it ought not to derogate from its Veracity; nor give us the Confidence any more to question the Truth of Scripture, than the Certainty of Providence. For by this Way of Proceeding, not only the Truth of Scripture,
but

~
Sermon
IV.

*Theol. Po-
lit. c. 7.*

but of all other Books whatsoever will be overthrown; nay the plainest and most obvious Appearances in Nature. And yet of this Kind are many of the Objections that are brought into the Field, and are made to serve in the Cause of Impiety: Such as these;
 “ That we don’t know into whose Hands
 “ those Books have fallen, nor in what Co-
 “ pies such various Readings have been
 “ found; or whether there are not more
 “ of that Kind in other Hands.

The Issue of all which is, That if this will invalidate the Truth of Scripture, it will also invalidate that of all Writings whatsoever; and so is no more to be regarded than an Argument against Motion, which is rather to be contemned than answered.

’Tis but reasonable then that we should give the same Quarter to the Scripture, that we allow to other Writings. And therefore all Objections levell’d against the Scriptures, which will equally be managed against any others, ought not to be allowed, unless we will give Credit to nothing but what we our selves hear and see: And then to carry on the Cause, we must recede again, since there are thousands of Cases happen, where even our own Senses may be subject to Error and Mistake.

II. Another Character for the Proof or Discovery of the Truth of History, is Self-Consistence and Agreement.

This

This is a necessary Character, and absolutely requisite to all true History; for nothing more shews the Weakness and Injudiciousness of a Writer, than that he comprehends not his own Design; and 'tis a sign he doth not comprehend it, that contradicts himself, and makes one Part to disagree with another.

I grant that this alone is not an infallible Character of Truth, that it is Self-consistent; for where the Plot is wholly fictitious and imaginary, there may be an exact Agreement throughout the Whole: The Model may be so regularly squared and laid out, that there may be a becoming Symetry; and Place, and Time, and all Circumstances made to concur, to set it off with the greater Advantage. But though this may be, where Truth is not, yet that cannot be true, which is without it, Truth being always consistent with it self. But there is this above all others observable in Scripture, That it is a System of several Books, wrote by several Persons, in several Ages, on several Subjects; and yet, however different in Stile and Phrase, Method and Order, are like the several Features in the Face, that besides the Sweetness in each alone, there is what we call Beauty, that arises from the Mixture of all.

Thus it is in the Sacred History, which has a great Variety in it of Matter, disper-

~
Sermon
IV.

sed up and down sometimes to quicken the Appetite, and excite the Diligence of the Reader, where each has its Order and Use: But when considered in one complex Body, and compared and shewn together, there is such a wonderful Agreement between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, the Types and Anti-Types, the Predictions and the Events, &c. that it makes a very beauteous, lively, and admirable Appearance, without any such Inconsistencies as may make it liable to have its Veracity questioned, if duly consider'd, and seriously examined.

I say, if duly consider'd, and seriously examined; for else it must be acknowledged, that there are some Appearances of this kind.

I. But I account not those to be Inconsistencies, which in other Authors may justly be esteemed Errors of the Transcribers; and for which no Author suffers in his Reputation. As for Instance, when the famous Historian *Herodotus* in one Place saith, That *Homer* lived about 400 Years before his Time; and in another Place, That it was about 600. This Escape doth not lessen his Reputation among judicious Persons; but for all that, he preserves the Character of *Pater Historiarum*, and is esteemed as no injudicious or careless Writer. And so if a greater Number in Scripture is taken for a less, or a less for a greater, when there are

Euterpe.
c. 53, Vita
Homer.

sufficient

the Holy Scriptures.

111

Sermon
IV

sufficient Directions therein for the Correction of it; 'tis not reasonable to charge this as an Inconsistency, and to urge it as a Reason for the overthrowing the Credit and Veracity of it.

If it be said, How doth it appear that they are the Faults of the Transcriber?

I answer, 'Tis apparently so sometimes, as may be observed in the various Readings; which could not be, were there not such Mistakes in the Transcriber. And where it doth not appear so to be, we ought in Reason so to judge, where there are all the Appearances of Faithfulness, Diligence and Observation in the Writers themselves. As for Instance, what can be more exactly penn'd than the Book of *Joshua*, in which there is a punctual Account of the Situation and Bounds of each Tribe, as it was set out and describ'd by *Joshua* himself, the Chief Arbitrer and Director of all; and if there should be found in his Book any Literal Errors, one Name put for another, or a different Reading of the same Names, we cannot in Reason judge it to be an Oversight of so sufficient and so careful a Writer, but that it might proceed from some one that transcribed it after the *Autograph*, or Original Copy, in some successive Generations, and which in Reason 'tis impossible wholly to prevent.

'Tis not here necessary for me to enter upon a Debate, how far the Providence of

R 2

God

~
Sermon
IV.

God doth herein concern it self in preserving the Text free from all Corruptions: I am now treating upon this Argument, humanly speaking, and of the Truth of it separately from its Divine Authority. And admitting there are such petty Errors, that creep in by such imperceptible Ways, though we cannot tell when or how they came in, and have been disseminated into all Copies, for ought we know, that are extant; yet I don't know any Reason why they should be charged upon the Original, and the Compiler of it; nor how the main Cause is herein concern'd.

It is a Respect due and given to all Authors of any Repute for their Care and Fidelity, that write consistently as to the Main, to pass the most favourable Construction upon any such little Errors; which if theirs, were not voluntary; or rather not to make them theirs, without an apparent Necessity for it.

And surely we should not then press the Case with the utmost Severity, and make that, which is in it self, and in all Books besides, a Venial Error, to be no less than a Mortal one in the Scripture, and to stab its Veracity to the Heart, and spoil its Credit for ever for the future.

If it be said, there is more Reason for this in the Case of Scripture than in any other Book; because That alone pretends to Divine Authority:

I an-

I answer, That for the present is not the Matter under Consideration; we are now upon the Point of its Truth, and content our selves to enter upon this Debate, as if it had no Pretence to Divine Authority and Inspiration.

And so we claim the same Favour and Right on its Behalf, as we do for any other Author's Credit and Repute, of great Antiquity and general Reception.

And therefore there ought no such Arguments or Objection to be urg'd for the Invalidity of its Authority, which it is not decent or reasonable to offer against other Writings; and we may reasonably claim the same Allowance for that, which all Mankind do give, or in Reason ought to give, in Things of this Nature.

2. I don't account these to be Inconsistencies or Contradictions, which do not affect the main Body or Part of the History; but that are like a Parenthesis in a Sentence, that whether inserted or omitted, the Sence is perfect and compleat. And therefore when the History of *Jacob* blessing his Sons is the Subject under Consideration; whether it was, as *Gen. 47. 31. He bowed himself upon the beds head*; or, as *Heb. 11. 21. He worshipped ----- upon the top of his staff*; is not material.

And so it may be in many Cases besides; but what real Prejudice will redound to the Reader by the Mistake of any Thing of this

The Truth of

kind or what Prejudice is there to the Relation, when a Thing of no Moment is omitted or inserted, exchanged or altered? I say not this as if I despaired of having an Account given of these Matters, (for that I am sensible is to be done, as in the Case before-recited) but to shew how unreasonable it is to condemn Scripture for that which we will let others go away with, free from all Blame and Censure; and they shall be good and laudable Writers, and their Histories admitted to be true and exact, though they have many Errors of this kind; and in the mean while the other shall be sifted to the very bottom, and every Mole-hill be a Mountain; and upon every little supposed Defect, it shall be said, *It has been weighed in the balance of Reason and Examination, and has been found too light.*

Thus partial are these sort of Persons, while they malevolently lay the Right hand upon the youngest, and their Left upon the eldest.

If indeed the Inconsistency were like a Disease in the Vitals, that affects the Heart or the Brain, it is to be accounted Mortal; if it did affect the main Body of the Relation, and had originally proceeded from the Author, it would have been a just Allegation, and his Truth and Fidelity, his Knowledge and his Care, might with good Reason be call'd in question. But that we deny; and appeal to all the various Readings and

and Observations on Scripture as our Compurgators in this Point. And consequently the Scripture will so far remain as a true Relater of Matters of Fact, and may compare with, and be deservedly set above all other Writings whatsoever; in which no one Man, whose Hand passed through the whole Work, can compare with that to which so many Hands in various Circumstances, at several Times, did so exactly concur and agree, as if they had been wrote by one Hand, and at one Time, and were but one entire Argument running through the whole.

III. Another Character is the Agreement of Scripture with other Authors; when such there are.

I may well say, When such there are:

Since it is evident that there are no Writers can pretend to the like Antiquity with *Moses*; and then we must wholly rely on his Authority for what he relates. But however, though the most ancient among the Heathens are much later than him, and so wanted those Advantages for Information which he had; yet they (so far as they agree with him) give a Confirmation and Credibility to what he relates, since they deliver it as the Sense of the Ages before, and of those in which they themselves lived. It is not here so much to our Purpose to enquire from whence they deriv'd

 Sermon
IV.

the Knowledge of the Things they relate, whether from the *Jews*, or from the general Tradition (which was best to be known from the Eastern Parts of the World) as it is to observe their Concurrence in them with the Sacred Writers. It is indeed probable, that the ancient Writers of the Heathens were (if at all) less beholding to the *Jews* for their Information, and the later more; as may be observed from the great Difference between the one and the other, the later being much plainer in many Things than the former : For the higher we ascend from the Time of the Olympiads, the more intricate, obscure, and fabulous they are. So that, generally speaking, it is with them as *Plutarch* saith of Geographers, That rather than leave any vacant Places in their Maps, fill them up with inaccessible Mountains, Frozen Seas, or Monsters. So when such Historians would compleat their Narratives, rather than be deficient in it, they insert wonderful and tragical Stories ; and like Nations that can give no Account of their Pedigree and Original, derive themselves from the Gods, or from the Earth, and become *Aborigines*.

But however, though this be too truly the State of the World for about 3000 Years from the Creation , yet there is a mixture of fine Gold with the greater Dross; and from whence we may extract so much as may serve to confirm what the Scripture advances

ances for Truth, and we for the Sake of it receive as such ; as might be shewn.

Sermon
IV.

This is a Tract has been often beaten by Ancients and Moderns; by *Aristobulus* and *Josephus* among the *Jews*; by several of the Fathers, such as *Justin Martyr*, *Tertullian*, *Ensebius*, &c. and by many in these Days. And it were easy to form a History out of them ; especially if we change but their Names, and instead of *Saturn*, read *Adam* ; instead of *Pandora*, *Eve* ; instead of the Garden of *Jupiter*, *Eden* ; instead of *Ogyges* or *Deucalion*, *Noah*, &c. for we should find more of the Truth under the disguise of the Fable than at the first appears ; and that the former gave Occasion frequently to the later.

Bochart,
Huetius,
Dr. Stil-
lingfleet,
&c.

But over and above this, we have a great Part of the ancient History of Scripture confirm'd by the express Testimony of some of their gravest and strictest Writers, as the Collection, that has been made in that way by several of the Learned, shews. To go no further than that of *Moses*, who is plac'd by some of them in the first Rank of the chiefest Lawgivers, and whose Wonders in *Egypt*, and at the *Red-Sea*, are not obscurely referr'd to by them.

IV. When there is a Disagreement between the Scripture and other Authors, there is sufficient Reason to prefer the former before the later, and to rectify these by that. As for the first 3000 Years, it is acknowledged,

Sermon
IV.

ledged, That there was elsewhere little less than Fable and Conjecture, Confusion and uncertain Tradition, as has been before observed: And who is there that is not able to see the Difference between an *Adam* and a *Saturn*, a *Noah* and *Bacchus*, a *Moses* and *Mercury*; between the Building of the *Babylonish* Tower, and the War of the Giants with the Gods; that is, between the true History and the Fable?

Who can observe the various Accounts amongst the Pagan Writers, their Inconsistencies one with another, their apparent Ignorance of what they write about, especially when it concerns other Nations or Ages, than those in which themselves liv'd, but must needs surrender up the Cause, and own that the one has much the Advantage of the other in point of Credibility?

So that setting aside the Divine Authority of Scripture, yet it has upon it all the Characters of Truth, which any Book or Books in the World can pretend: And if there be any thing necessary more than what those have to establish its Certainty and Credibility, that is not wanting. In conclusion, After all the Attempts made to weaken its Authority, it is with no better Success than that of *Celsus* or *Hierocles*, who endeavoured to set up an *Aristeas*, or an *Apollonius*, in Competition with our Blessed Saviour; and opposed their pitiful Shifts and Impostures, to his approved and incontestable Miracles.

But

But there is somewhat farther to be respected. Hitherto we have consider'd the Scripture as able and sufficient to support it self without any supernatural Aid ; and by the sole Evidence of Human Testimony, and such Characters as belong to other Writings in common with that : But there is a further Point in Reserve, and which I had chiefly in my Eye, and that is an Authority superior to all others, and peculiar to Scripture, That I mean of Divine Revelation ; and what for the Matter of it was inspired from above. And this, the due Consideration of it as an excellent History will open a Way to ; when we find not only all the Principles, Precepts, and Means, that are necessary to a Virtuous Life therein taught and prescrib'd ; but also admirable Examples of it in Fact, that nothing might be wanting to animate and incourage us to the like Practice. See it in the *Noahs*, the *Abrahams*, the *Josephs*, the *Job's*, the *Moses's*, the *Dauids*, and all the Patriarchs of old. See it in the Holy Apostles, the Martyrs and Confessors ; but above all in the Example of Examples, our Blessed Saviour.

Here is a History, that fills the Mind with the best Ideas and Images of Things ; that represents the Instances of our Duty with all the Advantage to our Thoughts, that recommends it self to our Attention by the Importance and Profitableness of the Argument, as well as the Force of its Authority.

~
 Sermon
 IV.

thority. Upon this therefore let us dwell, and make it the delightful Subject of our most serious Hours, which will abundantly reward all our Pains, and is sufficient to *furnish us thoroughly unto all good works,*

SER-

SERMON V.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN these Words, there is contain'd, (as I have before shewed)

I. A Description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*.

II. The *Certainty* of it ; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, &c.* 'Tis taken for granted.

III. The Order observ'd in delivering this Revelation ; it was at *sundry-times, and in divers manners, &c.*

IV. The Perfection and Conclusion of all, 'tis in *these last days by his Son.*

Under

The Divine Authority

Under the Second I have shewed,

1. That God has actually revealed his Will *at sundry times, and in divers manners.*
2. What are the Characters of true Revelation.
3. I am now in order to prove, that the Scriptures of the *Old and New Testament* do contain the Matter of Divine Revelation, and have upon them the Characters belonging to it.

In which there are Two Things to be considered :

1. The Matter contained in Scripture.
2. The Books containing that Matter.

Which Two will admit of a distinct Consideration. For,

(1.) These Two, the Matter and the Books, were originally distinct; for the Matter was revealed before it was written, and would have been of the same Authority if unwritten, as written. The Writing not being essential to the Authority, but only made use of as a fit Means for the Conveyance and Preservation of the Matter.

(2.) These Two are capable of a different Proof: For the Matter of Scripture was confirmed by Miracles, and had a Divine Attestation given to it: But we don't find the like Testimony given to the Books. There were Miracles upon Miracles to confirm the Truth,

Suppo-

suppose, contained in the Four Evangelists; but none to prove those Four Gospels to be wrote by Persons inspired, or that these were the Books wrote by them. For that has another Sort of Evidence, to be hereafter inquired into.

'Tis fit these Two should be considered apart. For,

(1.) If we were to discourse with a professed Infidel, we must begin with the Truth of the Matter, and then proceed to the Authority of the Books: And we may make Converts (as the Apostles and others in those Primitive Times did) from the Proof we are able to make of the Truth and Authority of our Religion, though at the present we have not the Books.

(2.) It's of no little Advantage. For by handling the Matter apart from the Books, we need not for the present concern our selves in the Doubts and Objections about the Books; such as the supposed Inconsistencies in Scripture; the various Readings; the uncertainty of the Authors; the Subject of Inspiration, whether Words as well as Matter, &c.

These being laid aside for the present, by this distinct Consideration of the Matter and the Books, will shorten our Work; and if we prove the Matter to be of Divine Original, we also gain a great Point toward the Proof of the Books themselves.

I am

~
Sermon
V.

I am to begin with the Matter contained in Scripture.

Now that is of a diverse Nature, and therefore according to the Nature of it, so is its Authority. For there is Matter of Fact and Historical Relations of Things; and when we say these are of Divine Authority, we thereby mean they were recorded and committed to Writing by the Appointment, Direction or Command of God. Again, there are Matters of a Moral Nature, which might be found out by, and are the Dictates of pure Reason; and when we say these are of Divine Authority, we thereby understand that they are authorised by the Divine Command, as well as in their own Nature Obligatory. In which Cases *holy men of God spake*, and wrote, *as they were moved*, incited, *by the Holy Ghost*, 2 Pet. I. 21.

But the more especial Way was, when the Matter was purely of Divine Revelation, and wholly proceeding from it; and though this were not to be learned, and found out by Reason, (as has been before shewed) yet 'tis agreeable to it; as I shall now proceed to prove; and that I shall do in this Order.

1. I shall consider, The Claim which the Matter of Scripture hath to Revelation and Inspiration.

2. The Characters upon which that Claim is grounded.

3. The Proof by which that Claim to Revelation is made good.

I. I shall

I. I shall consider the Claim, &c. And that is, If the Matter contained in the Scripture be not a Revelation from God, and the True Revelation, then there neither is, nor ever was, nor can be such a Revelation.

1. If That be not a Divine Revelation, there is no Revelation; for as That denies and rejects all Revelation besides it self, so there is none other that can produce such Evidence for it: And consequently, if notwithstanding the Evidence producible for Scripture, That is not to be admitted for Divine, then there is no Revelation existent in the World, since no other has the Evidence which That appears to have. This we may leave to any indifferent Person to judge of, by comparing the *Alcorán* with the *Bible*; and the *Chinese* Divinity of a *Confucius*, with that of Christianity.

2. If this be not a Revelation from God, then there never has been such a Revelation; and that for the Reason before given, viz. That there is no other Revelation extant save this. But if there ever had been a Revelation, and a Revelation designed for all Mankind, (as that of the Gospel apparently is) what was once, would always, and for ever afterwards, have been existent; since the same Reason there was once for a Revelation to Mankind, the same would have been for the Continuance of it; and the same Divine Goodness that took care there should be a Revelation, would certainly

~
Sermon
V.

ly have taken the like Care for the preserving of it. But if there be no Revelation, (as there is not, if the Scripture be not that Revelation) then there never was a Revelation; and so all that has been before said upon this Argument, about the Existence, Usefulness, and Necessity of a Revelation, must go for nothing.

3. If the Scripture be not of Divine Revelation, then there never can be a Revelation, or at least such a Revelation as shall oblige us to receive and believe it; since there can be no stronger Evidence produced for the Proof of it, than there is for that of Scripture. And therefore he that will pretend not to believe the Scripture-Revelation for want of sufficient Evidence, can never be convinced of the Truth of any Revelation. For what better Evidence can be given, as to the Matter, the Persons Inspired, the Supernatural Proofs of Miracles and Prophecy, &c. than what we have for the Scripture?

Admit then that there is, or ever was, or may be a Divine Revelation, we may be certain that the Matter contain'd in Scripture is of that Nature.

But though this must be allowed to be a good Step towards the Proof of the Divine Authority; yet it remains to consider what that Evidence is which is thus peculiar to Scripture-Revelation, and that none be-
fides

sides ever have or can have: And this is the Subject of the Second General :

Sermon
V.

Which is to consider,

II. The Characters belonging to Revelation, upon which that Claim is grounded.

That Revelation may be distinguish'd from Imposture and mere Pretence, there must be proper Characters that are essential to Revelation ; without which Marks of Distinction, we must do by it as few have done, and totally reject it ; or else as the *Romans* did by the Deities of other Countries, that admitted all into their *Calendar*, we must refuse none. But since there has been a Revelation (as all Mankind have been inclined to believe), and several Pretences to it (as the Experience of all Ages has shewed), we must follow the Direction of Scripture, which not only warns us of ^{2 Pet. 2.} *false Prophets*, and exhorts us to ^{2 I.} *try the Spirits*, but does also furnish us with such Characters, ^{1 Joh. 4.} as will enable us to distinguish the True from the False, ^{1, &c.}

And this Direction, methinks, may pass for one Character, according to that of our Saviour, *Joh. 3. 20, 21. Every one that doth evil, or speaketh falsely, hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd, and his Pretences discover'd. But he that doeth and speaketh truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God ;*

~
Sermon
V.

or that what he saith, may appear to be a Revelation from him.

Now when the Revelation so called doth thus offer it self to an impartial Tryal, and exhorts and requires all Persons to examine and make enquiry, and lays down such Rules, Principles, and Characters, as in the Opinion of all Men are sufficient to distinguish the True from the False; 'tis an undoubted Sign that it is able to justify it self, and to make out its Claim to a Divine Authority, by a Correspondence to those Characters.

By this the Scripture is distinguish'd from all others; for though there were several among the Heathen Law-givers that pretended to derive their Laws from the Direction of their Gods, yet it was rather to prevent Enquiry, than encourage it; and to oblige the People to an absolute Submission: For who might dispute that which the Gods commanded? Or who durst so much as enquire, where the *Fear of Religion* restrained them?

Justin.
Hist. l. 3.

But to expose it self to a Trial, and to require that Men examine before they receive and believe, and to give them such Signs as shall serve to describe the Truth, and detect Imposture, is peculiar to the Scripture. From thence therefore it is that I shall produce such Characters as will give that a Title to Divine Authority, and oblige us to a Belief of it. And what are such, if these

these are not? *viz.* That it could come only from God, is worthy of him, and has a Divine and Supernatural Evidence to attest it. Where these are, there is a Divine Authority, there is a Revelation. And these I shall shew do belong to what the Scripture proposes as such.

I. It is a Character belonging to Revelation, and a Sign of the Truth of it, when it apparently has God for the Author, and can proceed from none but him. This is a Character, I presume, will upon Examination be found to belong to Scripture.

As I shall now attempt to prove, by considering that which is the chief Subject of it; and that is the Revelation of God's Good Will to Mankind.

Here I shall premise and take for granted,

1. That God having created Man, created him in a State of Innocency and Purity; for being infinitely Good, it is not to be conceived that he made any thing Evil in it self.

2. That Man fell from this happy State; of Innocent, he became Guilty; of a Pure, he became a Depraved Creature, as the Experience of all Ages shews him now to be.

3. That Almighty God was disposed to pardon and admit him again to favour.

Upon this State of Things the Scripture proceeds: And because it was impossible for Man to find out of himself the Way and

~
Sermon

V.

Means by which he might be restored, there needed a Revelation to inform him in it.

I Grant there is a Natural Means, and what the Reason of the Thing supposes to be necessary to our Reconciliation, and that is Repentance.

But that this is of it self a Means sufficient, and upon which alone God will be reconciled to the Offenders, has been always doubted of; as is evident from the several ways of Atonement, and especially of Sacrifices, practised in all Parts of the World. For since God is the Governor of the World, it seems no more reconcilable with his Justice, and consistent with that Authority he is to maintain, to pardon all Offenders upon Repentance, than it is consistent with the Ends of Government among Men, to accept of the Offenders Penitence as a full Satisfaction to the Law, and to remit the Penalty threatned.

We have an Instance to the contrary, in this very Case; when, notwithstanding a supposed Repentance in Mankind, God inflicted the Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt dye.* Now therefore, since the Natural Means of propitiating Almighty God was not sufficient, there is somewhat further in reserve; and what that is, none could tell, but he who had it in his own Power what to accept, and what to refuse; it was for him to reveal, that was to institute.

And

And if we take a view of the Scheme of what the Scripture sets before us as to this Matter, it will abundantly confirm what I have proposed as a Character of Revelation, and that is, That it is from God, and only from him.

The Sum of which is, That since Mankind had thus lapsed into a Preternatural State, in which, through the Infirmary and Corruption of their Nature, they themselves neither were, nor could do what was acceptable to God; in order to a Restitution and Reconciliation, it was designed that the Son of God himself should become a Mediator by a present Stipulation, and in a prefixed Time, by an actual Undertaking to dye for us. That accordingly, in Testimony of God's Acceptance of the Atonement, and of his Reconciliation, the Son rose from the dead, and ascended into Heaven, is there our Intercessor, and the Dispenser of all those Gifts, and that Supervenient Grace which is necessary to the reforming Mankind, and the fitting them for that State he is now invested in, and has promised to bestow upon such as are qualified for it.

Now who is there, that upon a Review of these several Particulars that do constitute the Christian Religion, and make up the chief Subject of Scriptural Revelation, can pretend that this was to be found out by Human Consideration and Enquiry; or rather, that must not grant it proceeded

~
Sermon
V.

from God? Especially if it be observed what a wonderful Intermixture there is in this Scheme, of the Divine Mercy and Justice; of his Mercy in pardoning the Sinner, and of his Justice in requiring an Atonement. What a Representation of his Hatred to Sin on one hand, when God established so valuable an Atonement as the Blood of his own Son; and of his Favour and Love to Mankind, when *he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all?* What a Foundation for our Hope on one hand, when he accepted of the Propitiation; and what a Dread of Offending is there on the other, when *he that knew no sin, was made a sin-offering for us?*

All which laid together, do confirm the Truth of this Character, and the Title that the Scripture-Revelation hath to it.

But there is somewhat further to be added in Proof of this Point, That it was a Revelation from God; and that is, The many Prophecies that are interwoven with it in Scripture; which could proceed from none but Him who alone has all Causes and Events in his Power, and so alone could foretell how those Causes would operate, and what should be the Events of such Operation. These being the chief part of the Revelation concerning the whole Scheme of Man's Salvation, confirm what I have before said, That it was from God, and from Him alone. But this must be reserved to its proper Place, under the Third General Head.

To

To go on :

II. A Character necessarily belonging to Divine Revelation, is, That it be worthy of God, and what becomes the Majesty of Heaven to make known to Mankind.

When we say it is to be worthy of Him, thereby is meant, that it is suitable to the Perfections of his Nature, to his Holiness and Justice, his Goodness and Mercy, his Wisdom and Power, &c. To which, and all of which, a Revelation truly so can no more be repugnant, than God himself can be other than he is, and destitute of those Perfections which are essential to him.

In discoursing upon which we may observe,

1. That it cannot be denied but the Revelation of himself to Mankind is worthy of God, though it be an infinite Condescension.

It was an Infinite Condescension in the Deity, that had all in himself, to make such a Creature as Man; and it is no more unworthy of God to reveal himself to him, than it was to make him. For what other Reason was there for the making such a Creature, and the enduing him with the Light of Reason, but that he might own, honour, and serve the Author of his Being? And since to know and acknowledge God is the chief End for which Man was made, it is as much becoming Almighty God

Sermon
V.

~
Sermon
V.

God to reveal himself to him, as it was to make him for the Knowledge of himself.

2. That is a Thing worthy of God to reveal, which is a Thing worthy of God to do: And such is the Recovery and Restoration of Man to the like Condition he was created in, and unhappily fell from; for that is a Kind of Re-making him, and giving him a New Being: And since a New Being to a Depraved Being, what Being was to No Being, it is as much becoming Almighty God from a Depraved State to raise him to a State of Purity and Holiness, as it was at the first to give him a Being that before had none.

And this is the great Subject of what we call Divine Revelation; which as it respects Man, may come under a Twofold Consideration; and that is the Perfection of Human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind.

It will be a needless Undertaking, to prove that these Ends are worthy of God; but that which rather becomes us is to shew, That as it is the great Design of the Scriptural Revelation to represent this, and to acquaint us with the Method that the Almighty Wisdom and Goodness thought fit to observe; so the Method, as there laid down, is worthy of such Wisdom and Goodness, as I shall now proceed to shew in the Two Instances given.

First, The Method Almighty God is in Scripture said to take for the purifying and the

the perfecting Human Nature, is highly worthy of so Glorious a Being; and that is Threefold, Cautionary, Moral, and Supernatural.

(1.) That which I call Cautionary, is the Way Almighty God was pleased to take for the representing his Displeasure against Sin, and to make Mankind cautious of offending. The Means made use of before the Fall was a Penalty threatned, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt dye.* But because that had proved of so little Force to restrain Mankind, and for fear lest when God had received them into Favour after such a Threatning, his Mercy and Indulgence might be abused, and become an Encouragement to Sin, God added thereunto an Expiation (as has been before said), and that to be made by his own Son; who from the Dignity of his Person, and the voluntary Oblation of himself, should be reputed as a Representative of the Whole, and the Whole be esteemed to suffer with him. By which Means, as God's Mercy would be abundantly testified in a Design for redeeming them; so his Justice would be exemplified, when he that had no Sin of his own, should yet be made a Sin-Offering, and suffer for them. For how could they presume after this to offend the Almighty Father, when rather than suffer his Laws to be violated, his Authority slighted, his Holiness and Justice disparaged, or leave Mankind under a Temptation

~
Sermon
V.

tation so to do, he would express his Hatred against Sin, and his Resolution to punish it, by requiring and substituting such a Sacrifice as that of his Son in their Stead? This is the apparent Reason of such an Institution; and both the Institution and Reason of it are worthy of the Divine Counsel; since there is no Way in which these Things can be represented to greater Advantage, than by the Scripture-Scheme of Man's Redemption.

(2.) There is the Moral Means, that serves the same End, *viz.* the purifying and perfecting Human Nature, to which, Revelation gave the last and finishing Hand. It is true, these Moral Principles are no other than Natural Maxims, and which were Nature, unassisted, sufficient for, might have been extracted out of it. But Mankind were no more able to attain to that Skill of themselves, than an unexperienced Person, and unacquainted with the Art of Chymistry, can extract such Exalted and Generous Spirits out of the Bodies of Plants and Animals, as upon Trial we find they are endued with. It is another Light we view Nature by, since the communicating of the Evangelical Revelation to the World. Nature and Reason now, are not the Nature and the Reason they were before, or are still where that Revelation has not been known: And therefore if we would know what the Force of those Principles are, and how far they operated by their

their own Power, and of themselves, the Way is not to judge of it as it appears to us, where the Gospel Revelation is, but as it was in the State of pure *Heathenism*, not excepting the finer Part of it (as it flourished in *Greece* it self) and as it is now in some of the remote Parts of the World, as in the *West-Indies*, &c. For *Gentilism* it self apparently mended upon the Publication of the Gospel; and then their *Moralists* wrote with another Strain, than those of their own Sect did before that Time.

For in the Scripture, there is such an entire and compleat System of all Things requisite to the Perfection of Human Nature (as far as in this State it is capable of it) that Nothing is wanting for Direction and Obligation.

There we find the most Natural Characters of Good and Evil traced along from the first Rise in all their Tendencies, and the just Bounds of both described. There we have on one Hand the most enforcing Encouragements to Virtue and Goodness, and on the other the most necessary Cautions and Admonitions against Sin; and both fortified with proper Instances and Examples.

There we find the Noblest Principles, and exactest Rules; and the great Lines of our Duty plainly set forth in their utmost Extent; and that as well for the Regulation of the Thoughts and Desires, as the Government of our Actions.

There

Sermon
V.

There we find that Duty enforced by the highest Obligation, by no less Authority than that of God himself, whose Precepts and Injunctions they are declared to be, and not the mere Results of our own Nature and Reason.

And whereas Nature falls as short in its Sanctions (having only Conscience to enforce them) as its Authority; when these Moral Principles become God's Laws, they have Rewards and Punishments of another Kind annexed to them, and as everlasting as our Souls to bind them upon us.

So that as far as Nature thus directed and excited can go, we have the most effectual Means in our Power for the Amendment and Purification of it.

But because it is only so far in our Power, and that in the Issue we prove too remiss in the exerting of it; and that after all, Nature flags and recoils, and is too much Nature still. Therefore,

(3.) There is a Supernatural Means to render the other effectual, and to give Encouragement and Success to our Endeavours; and that is a Power as Divine as the Authority, which is the Assistance of the Holy Spirit of God. Look we upon the Morality of the greatest Philosophers, how poor is that to the Doctrine of our Saviour and the Apostles? Look we upon the Fruits of it, and there we shall find them short of their Principles; and that the Case was much with them as with the Stoical *Poſidonius*, that

would

would not allow Passions in Human Nature; that when invaded by the Gout, might chide both that and himself for his Sensation of it; but the Disease and Nature kept on their Course, and would own no such Authority. So it was with them that had only Nature to correct Nature; that while they pretended to be the Physicians of it, could not cure themselves, nor alter so much as Custom which had altered that.

Sermon
V.

The Instances they give of a Philosophical Cure, are as rare as the Miracles they pretend to have been wrought in the Temple of *Æsculapius*, or by a *Vespasian*, few and questionable; a *Phædon*, or a *Polemon*, to credit the Schools of a *Socrates* or a *Xenocrates*. But the Instances of such as were converted by our Saviour and Apostolical Persons, were like his Miracles, numberless and not to be disputed. When the Gospel flew like Lightning through the Earth, and became as successful in reforming, as teaching the World; Nature by it was changed, and the Temper became subject to the Divine Power. So that the Doctrine of Christ *did turn those that were immersed in wickedness, to a life agreeable* Contr. *to Reason, and the Practice of all Virtue*; as *Ori-* Cels. l. 1. & 2. *gen* shews, and appeals to his Adversary in.

And what was then done, would always be done, if there were not some Obstruction on our Part, either as to asking Assistance, or in the not improving it; according to that of our Saviour, *Matthew 13. 12. Who-*

soever


 Sermon
 V.

whoever hath, and useth it, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.

2dly. It is worthy of God, and becoming the most Benevolent as well as the most Powerful of Beings, to consult what may be for the Happiness of the Reasonable Nature, and to propound this as an Encouragement to them in the Performance of that Service he expects and requires of them.

And what can make them Happy, if the Order and Method of Salvation revealed in Scripture be not sufficient for it? Whereby they are not only assured of the Protection and Blessing of Divine Providence in this Life, but also of a State of Immortality in the Life to come: Where they shall be taken into the Enjoyment of their Ever-blessed Creator; and be fitted both in Body and Soul, by the Divine Power, for such a Participation.

To which I may add, That it is as worthy of God to reveal the Way by which that Happiness is to be attained. I grant, that by the Use and Power of Reason, and the Sense we have of the Difference between Good and Evil, we may learn, though obscurely, and very imperfectly, what is acceptable to God: But yet without Revelation we are much in the Dark, and can as little know what is on our Part necessary toward the Attaining of that Happiness, as we do what the Condition of the Future State is, and wherein the Happiness of it consists.

There

There is as much difference between what is only supposed, and what is necessary, as there is between what we hope for, and what is certain. And therefore, as there needs a Revelation to assure us of that which without Revelation we only hoped for; so there is as much need of Revelation to inform us of what is necessary to our Acceptance with God, and to our Happiness in another World; and without which we are left to Conjecture only. So that as far as Certainty is to be preferr'd beyond Hope and Imagination, and the Knowledge of what is necessary is beyond Conjecture; so much is the Comfort of Revelation beyond that of Nature; and so much it is becoming Almighty God, who gave us our Nature and Being, to acquaint us with what may both make us Happy, and lead us to it. Especially was this necessary, considering how far the World had wandered out of the Right Way; and what Superstitious and Infamous Rites had been taken up; and what Practices, dishonourable to the Deity and Human Nature, had been used. And this Way to Happiness the Scripture has plainly reveal'd.

3dly. It is a Design worthy of God, to reveal Himself to the World, and to give Mankind a Right Notion and Representation of his Nature. The Being of God, is what the whole Creation proclaims; and there are some Attributes of his lye open to all,

~
Sermon
V.

and are conspicuous in their Effects; such are his Wisdom and Power. - But there are others that we rather know by Inference, and need a farther and brighter Light to inform us in; and such are his Goodness and his Mercy. And since these are as essential Perfections of the Deity as the other, and exceed them in the Influence they have upon Mankind, as to our Love and Adoration of him; and yet are not so legible in the Frame of Nature, nor so observable in the Course of his Providence as the other; we cannot conceive but that it is as becoming our Creator to represent himself to be a God Gracious and Merciful in a Revelation to Mankind, as to be a God Great, Powerful, and Wise in the Creation. We see how confused the *Gentile* World was in their Notion of the Supreme Power; how inconsistently they thought, and how low their Representations were of the Deity: And at best they had a very imperfect Notion of those Divine Attributes of Love and Goodness, of Pity and Compassion, of Indulgence and Condescension, of Patience and Forbearance, of Mercy and Forgiveness, which the Scripture represents with Life and Perspicuity.

There it is that we find the Almighty Creator stooping to the Creature, condescending to their Condition, bearing with their Infirmities, pitying their Miseries, forgiving their Sins. There we find him re-
proving

proving, arguing, following Sinners with Importunity, and leaving nothing undone, that was consistent with his Nature and Honour to do, toward the Salvation of Mankind. And above all, *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him,* 1 Joh. 4. 9.

Sermon
V.

So that if to reveal what was not otherwise to be known, concerning God's Reconciliation to Mankind, and the Terms upon which he is reconciled; if to restore Man to the State he is fallen from, and to promote him to a State of Purity, Perfection, and Happiness; if for God to reveal and to render himself acceptable to Mankind by the most obliging Characters of Love and Favour, be worthy of him; lastly, if to reveal what is most worthy of God, be a Character of Revelation, Then the Scripture is such, and what is therein contained must be from God.

III. A Character necessarily belonging to Revelation, and by which the True is to be distinguished from the False and Pretended, is a Divine and Supernatural Evidence; which is the same with the Third General Head, *viz.* The Proof by which the Scripture's Claim to Divine Revelation is to be made good; and that is next to be considered.

~
Sermon
V.

Now there are Three Instances of this kind, *viz.* Prophecy, Miracles, and the wonderful Success of the Christian Religion, and the Preservation of it under the most potent Opposition, and greatest Discouragements.

*Cic. de Di-
vin. l. 1.*

(1.) Prophecy. That is of it self a Revelation ; and as it is what all Nations, as well Learned as Barbarous, have acknowledged ; so being an Instance of Revelation, it is a good Proof of that Revelation which it doth accompany, and is interwoven with. And this is the Case before us ; for the Scripture being composed of Matters of a different kind, cannot have the same Sort of Evidence : But Prophecy being Self-evident, (when the Event has apparently answer'd the Prediction) and a Supernatural Evidence, is a good Proof to what has no such Evidence ; and which for the Sake of this Proof is as much a Matter of Faith, and as credible, as the Prophecy it self ; because such a Testimony being a Testimony from God, cannot be applied to the Support of a Falshood. So that where there is Prophecy truly so, we may conclude that to be True, and to come from God, to which that Testimony is given ; for if the Testimony be Divine, the Doctrine confirmed by it must be Divine also.

In discoursing upon which, I premise,

1. That there is such a Thing as Prophecy ; that Things future have been predicted :

Tully

Tully saith, *This all Nations have agreed in;* as has been afore said.


Sermon
V.

2. That Prophecy is a good Testimony to what it is given (as I have proved a'lready).

So that there is nothing remains, but to shew that the Revelation in Scripture hath had this Testimony.

And of this there are two Sorts, Near, or Remote. Of both which, we have an Instance in the Prophet sent to *Jeroboam*, 1 Kings 13. 2.

The Remote was, That a Child should be born, *Josiah* by Name, about 330 Years after, who should burn Mens Bones upon that Altar. The Proximate (which we may otherwise call a Sign) was, That at that Time *the Altar should be rent, and the ashes poured out*. If the Remote had been alone, it would have had little Influence upon them who were most nearly concerned; and therefore there needed some present Sign to verify it. But otherwise, the Remote is the stronger, especially when at such a vast Distance of Time, as shall render it impossible for Men or Angels to foresee, or by any Practices of theirs to accomplish; when it depends upon Voluntary as Natural Agents, and is in the Conclusion answered by a Parallel Event, it is to After-Ages a certain and indisputable Evidence.

To which, if we add the Concurrence of both, when there is a Chain and Series of Prophecies near or remote, in a certain and

~
Sermon
V.

continued Order following each other, the first looking forward to others that are to succeed, and the latter having Retrospect to the former; there is no reasonable or possible Exception to be made against the Matter thus testified, without excepting against the Testimony of Prophecy, contrary to the Sense of all Mankind.

As for Instance; If there be a Prophecy or Prophecies in several Ages, from which it plainly appears, that at such a precise Time, in such an Age of the World, some Hundreds or Thousands of Years after, there should arise a certain Person, born at such a Place, and in an extraordinary Way, and descended from such and such Progenitors, who should come to reform Mankind; and, in Confirmation of his Doctrine, should perform many astonishing Acts, and do many Supernatural Works; that at a certain Time, and in a certain determined Year, he should be put to Death by his own Nation, and upon it that Nation should be captivated and destroyed, and the Country desolate; it is a Testimony not to be disproved.

And yet setting aside the many Prophecies in Scripture relating to particular Persons and Families, to the *Jews* and other Nations, I shall only instance in some, of those concerning our Saviour; and others, of our Saviour's himself: The former of which will appear to be exactly parallel to the Case proposed.

The first of these is the Prediction immediately after the Fall of *Adam*, and 4000 Years before the actual Completion of it; That there should be one born of the seed of the woman, and supernaturally made of her alone (as *Adam* was out of the Earth without a Woman) that should bruise the serpent's head, who had beguiled *Eve* through his subtilty.

Gen. 2.
14.
Gal. 4. 4.

About 2000 Years after which Prophecy, and so 2000 Years before our Saviour, it was revealed to *Abraham*, That in his Seed, and by one who should descend from him, all the families of the earth should be blessed; and which was afterward renewed to *Isaac* and *Jacob*.

Gal. 3.
16.
Gen. 12.
3, &c.

Again; about 1700 Years before Christ, it was prophesied by *Jacob*, That *Shiloh*, or the *Messiah*, should descend from his Son *Judah*.

Gen. 49.
8.

About 1000 Years before our Saviour's Birth, *David* was exalted to the Throne, of whose Family the *Messiah* was to be a Branch; whence it was that he was commonly known among the *Jews*, by the Character of *David's Son*.

Matth. 22.
42.

In the same Royal Prophet have we the Prediction of our Saviour's Death, Resurrection, and Glorification; and in very minute Circumstances, as to the first of these, *Vid.* Psal. 16. 10. 22. 1, 7, 8, 14, 16, 18. 110, &c.

This is also the great Theme of *Isaiak's* Prophecy, 700 Years before the Accomplishment,

~
Sermon
V.

ment, That there should be *a root out of Jesse*, the *Messiah*, who should die for the Sins of the People, be rejected by his own Nation, but be believed by the *Gentiles*. Isa. 11. 10. 42. 10, &c. 53.

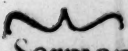
In the same Age lived *Micah*, who foretells the very Place he should be born in, viz. *Bethlehem-Ephrata*.

Lastly ; About 500 Years before our Lord's Incarnation, *Daniel* directly points to the Time and the Year the *Messiah* should suffer in, which was to be in the Midst of the Seventieth Prophetical Week, (each of which consists of Seven Years) that is, the 490th Year, from the Decree of *Artaxerxes* for the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*. As may easily be computed by *Ptolemy's* Canon, and reckoning the Years backward from the Death of our Saviour, (which was in the Reign of *Tiberius*) to some fixed Year of *Artaxerxes*.

In Consequence of which, the City and Sanctuary were to be destroyed, and the whole Country laid desolate, as with a *Flood*.

This Conclusion leads us on to the Second Branch of Prophetical Observations, viz. our Saviour's own Predictions, which are very many ; but a most remarkable one is his Prophecy of the Destruction of that People, City, and Country, foretold by *Daniel* as to the very Time ; and which our Saviour describes so particularly, as if he had it at that Instant before his Eyes, when he discoursed of it to his Disciples.

There

There he foretells, * The preceding Signs,  as Famines, and fearful Sights, &c. * That many False Prophets should arise. * That there should be barbarous Slaughters one of another. * That *Jerusalem* should be closely besieged; but withal, that at that Time there should be an Opportunity for escaping; which he advises them to take, and to fly to the Mountains for present Security. * That the Enemy should at last cast a Trench about it, and keep them that remained in on every Side. * That he should finally take the City, and lay it even with the Ground; and that not one Stone of the stately Structure, the Temple, (which they then were admiring) should be left upon another. * That the Surviving *Jews* should be led Captive into all Nations, and never return again to that Land as Proprietors. * That all this was because they knew not the Time of their Visitation. * And that this should happen in that very Age.

Sermon
V.

Never was any Prophecy more express, never any Sentence more terrible, nor more punctually fulfilled, as to all the Particulars before-recited; and for which we may appeal to *Josephus* the *Jew*, who was an Eye-Witness of all, and as exactly describes it as to those Instances, as if he was writing a Comment upon our Saviour's Prophecy, *Joseph. de Bell.* l. 4, 5, 6, 7.

And accordingly, as the Temple, though attempted by *Julian* the Apostate's Order, never

~
 Sermon
 V.

never could be built; (as the Heathen Historian *Ammianus Marcellinus* relates, *Hist.* l. 23.) so that People to this Day remain Vagabonds, without any certain Place, dispersed over the World.

Having traced this Subject thus far, we may proceed.

2. Another Way by which we prove the Claim that the Matter of Scripture hath to a Divine Authority, is Miracles; of which Kind there is nothing wanting that can reasonably be desired; and that either as to the *Judaical*, or *Christian* Dispensation.

As for Instance: If a Person should pretend that he comes from God with a Revelation, and which he requires us to hearken to, on Peril of Damnation; What Satisfaction should we desire?

Surely if the Doctrine he teaches be in it self credible, and worthy of God, and what in the Nature and Tendency of it proves to be useful and beneficial to Mankind, we have as much Evidence as the Nature of the Thing will bear. And farther, if the Person, upon whom we are to rely, doth openly, and in the Sight of all, even of Enemies that watch him, as well as Friends, and in the most Publick Assemblies, cure all Manner of Diseases, though naturally incurable, by a Word, or a Touch, and even at a Distance. If he commands the Winds and the Seas, the Good and the Evil Angels, feeds Thousands in a Desert with no more than what would

satis:

satisfy a few, and raises the Dead. If he tells the most secret Thoughts, Inclinations, and Practices of his Enemies as well as Followers. Lastly, If when himself is put to a violent Death, he in a few Days, according to his own Prediction, rises again, appears to, and converses with those that knew him when alive, and saw him dead: And afterwards, in the View of many, ascends bodily into Heaven; and within a few Days, as a farther Testimony of his former Mission and present Glorification, confers the same or like Power upon his Disciples: Who can reasonably doubt of the Truth of what he has taught?

I need not here draw the Parallel.

And if the Question should be put, as it was by those whom *John the Baptist* sent, *Art thou he who should come?* Our Saviour's Answer will serve for one here, *Tell John what Things ye have heard and seen, how that the blind see, &c. Luke 7. 19.*

There needs no greater Evidence to convince Mankind.

3. Another Proof of the Divine Authority of the Matter of Scripture, is the Event and Success, correspondent to former Predictions. Such was that of the *Israelites* in *Canaan*: And much more, the wonderful and astonishing Progress of the Gospel, without any of that Assistance and Force which that People had, and when it had the Force of Emperors and Kings to oppose it.

Could

~
Sermon
V.

Could it be thought possible, that a few simple and timorous Persons, who had been bred up to a mean Employment, and had never been out of their own Country, should each by himself undertake perilous and remote Journeys, among People they had no Knowledge of, and to whose Tempers, Customs, and Language, they were altogether Strangers; and should prevail with them to change their Gods and their Religion, their Customs and their Lives?

Could it be thought, that Men of no Authority nor Interest, of no Learning, Depth of Judgement, nor Subtilty in arguing, should be able to maintain and propagate a Doctrine that seemed to be foolish and absurd, a Doctrine of a Crucified Saviour, a Doctrine opposite to the sensual Inclinations and Interests of Mankind, (as the State of the World then was) a Doctrine that obliged them that believed in it, to profess it with the Hazard of all that was dear to them in this World, and upon no other Encouragement than a Reward in another?

And yet even this Doctrine, so meanly attended, became so successful, that according to our Saviour's Prediction, *Matth. 24. 14.* before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and within Forty Years after his Death, *the sound of it went out into all the earth*, *Rom. 10. 18.* Not to proceed further in this Argument than Scripture; in those early Times we find Converts, if not Churches, in the most frequented

quented Cities for Trade, Learning, and Dominion; in *Corinth* and *Ephesus*, *Athens* and *Rome*; in the Courts of Princes, even of a *Herod* and a *Nero*: *Acts* 13. 3. *Phil.* 4. 22. And where not?

Now if there had not been Truth in the Doctrine; If it had not been a Doctrine worthy of God, suitable to the Desires and Expectations of Mankind; If it had not had a Supernatural Evidence and Testimony, and an Assistance as great as its Evidence, it could not in those Circumstances have made its own Way, nor have proved in the Event so powerful and successful. No, it was God that chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which were mighty: And it must be a Revelation from him alone, that had all these Testimonies on its Side to confirm it. So that we may conclude as we began, That if ever there was a Revelation, the Revelation contained in Scripture is a Revelation, and the only True Revelation now in the World.

And if so it be, then what an Obligation is there upon us to observe it? When 'tis God speaking to us, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard from him, lest at any time we should let them slip, *Heb.* 2. 1.

SERMON VI.

H E B. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN these Words, we have (as has been observed)

I. A Description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

II. The *Certainty* of that Revelation; 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake, &c.*

III. The Order observ'd in delivering that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Persons; *In time past by the Prophets, and in the last days by his Son.*

IV. The Conclusion and Perfection of that Revelation, 'tis in the last days by his Son.
 Under

Under the Second I have shewed,

1. That there has been such a Revelation.
2. That the Scripture is of Divine Revelation, and has upon it the Characters belonging to such Revelation.

For the better disposing of what I had to say under this Head, I proposed Four Questions to be resolved, *viz.* Serm. IV.

Q. 1. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to be true?

Q. 2. How we can prove the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation?

Q. 3. How we can prove the Books of Scripture to have been of Divine Inspiration?

Q. 4. How we prove these Books that are now extant, and received by the Christian Church as Canonical, to be those very Books?

I have already Treated of the Two former, and shall now take the Two latter into Consideration.

Where we may observe somewhat as to the Writers, and then as to Inspiration.

1. As to the Writers; of whom we may reckon Three Sorts.

(1.) Meerly Human; such as St. Luke speaks of, that out of a good and pious Intent,

Sermon
VI.
Luk. I. I.

tent, took in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which were most surely believed. And this may be done without any material Error by Persons duly qualified for it.

Hist. Ec-
cles. l. 2.
c. 15. l. 5.
v. 8.

(2.) Those that had what they wrote immediately dictated, or at least approved by such Persons as were inspired. So *Eusebius* saith, that the Gospel of St. *Mark* was approved by St. *Peter*, and St. *Luke's* by St. *Paul*.

(3.) Such as were immediately inspired in the Writing, as St. *Peter* and the rest of the Divine Writers are supposed to have been.

Now though the first of these may be sufficient in ordinary Cases, and of good Use in the extraordinary, where there is no better; yet where the Salvation of Mankind is concerned, there is somewhat farther necessary, and that is, that the Persons that write should be assisted and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, or write by the Direction and Approbation of those that are inspired.

2. As to the Inspiration, that is Twofold:

Exod. 20.
1, 22.

(1.) Either when the Matter, Words, and Order, are immediately dictated by God himself; as the Decalogue was, and all that was revealed by Voice; for then it was as Discourse with us.

(2.) Or,

(2.) Or, When Persons Selected wrote by Direction or Command from God, what was revealed to them, as to the Matter only, whether by Way of Declaration, or Representation.

In which last Case, the Persons Inspired took their own Way; which is the Reason of the Difference in Style and Phrase between their several Compositions; that, for Example, *Isaiah* writ in a lofty courtly Style; and that *Amos*, a Herdsman, writ after a more Rustical Way. So *Erasmus* saith of *St. Luke*, that he writ in a purer and clearer Style, because of his Skill in the Greek Tongue.

Here the Office of the Divine Spirit was to suggest the Matter, or to represent the Case, to assist and supervise, so that no Error should be in the Original Copy; though he left each to the Liberty of their own Way in expressing it. As if we were to send several Messengers upon the same Errand, we deliver the Message to them, and tell them what they are to say; but leave every one of which to express it as they think fit, and as they are able: Each of them is a faithful and wise Servant, though he keeps not exactly to the very Words of his Master, and all agree in the Drift and Substance, though they differ in the Expression or Circumstance. So it is in the Evangelists, where they all agree in the material Parts of the History,

N

though

Sermon
VI.

though they differ often in the Words, and sometimes, perhaps, in some minute Passages relating to it.

In one or other of these two Senses, the Scripture may be said to be wrote by Divine Inspiration; that is, either by immediate and verbal Suggestion, or by Direction: And this I shall now endeavour to prove, by answering the Third Question, *viz.*

2. 3. How we do prove the Books of Scripture, which contain the Matter of Revelation, to have been of Divine Inspiration?

In proceeding upon this, I shall premise:

1. That the proper Course for proving the Divine Authority of the Scripture, is to begin with the Matter, abstracted from the Books, (as I have already done) and then to proceed from thence to the Books.

And therefore they begin at the wrong End, that would disprove the Truth of the Revelation, or Matter contained in Scripture, by such Objections as they make from the Writing, and the Books. For the Matter stands upon a Proof and Evidence of its own (as I have shewed), and will stand, though the written Word, or Scripture, should fail of supporting its own Authority.

Therefore those that will venture upon disproving the Revelation, must in Reason begin with the Matter; let them there try their Skill, and call in Question the Proof

Proof by which that is supported. But this we have already prevented, by having proved the Matter of Scripture to have been of Divine Inspiration.

2. Though there seems not to be so clear and full a Proof for the Inspiration of the Books, as there is for the Matter, since the Matter has the utmost Attestation it is capable of, *viz.* Miracles; but there were no Miracles wrought to prove these Books to have been of Divine Inspiration (as has been before observed): Yet if we prove that the Books were written by Inspired Persons, and that what they wrote is the same with what they taught, it is equivalent, and much of the same Force and Authority.

Serm. V.
p. 151.

For what need was there of Miracles to prove the Books to be written by Inspiration, when the Persons writing them were Inspired, and that what they wrote is the same with what they taught, and when what they taught was confirmed by the Miracles which they wrought?

Therefore while the Authors were in Being, there needed no Miracles to prove these Writings to be theirs, when they themselves asserted them so to be: And after their Decease, we have as much Reason to believe the Scriptures which they wrote, to have been of Divine Inspiration, as what they taught to be a Revelation; both now depending upon the like Evidence,

~
Sermon
VI.

dence, that is, Testimony, as to which we have no more Proof of the Matter, than we have of the Books.

3. From hence it follows, That not to believe the Scripture to have been of Divine Inspiration, is in Effect to reject and deny the Revelation therein contained: The Scripture being the best, and in the present Circumstances of Mankind, the only Means left for the Conveyance of it; I say, in the present Circumstances, it is the only Means; for when the Circumstances were other than they are now, or have been for Sixteen hundred Years and upwards, there was then no such absolute need of a written Word: When the Instructors of Mankind had their Lives protracted to a vast Extent, as it was with the Patriarchs of old; or when there were Inspired Persons alive to teach and rectify any Mistakes that might arise and disturb the Peace of the Church; as it was in the Times of the Apostles.

But when Things fell into an ordinary Course, and that fallible Persons (as all afterwards were) might mistake in their Reports of Doctrine, &c. and the weak Memories of others not retain what they had been taught, and that the insincere would wrest what was taught to serve their perverse Designs; the Case being thus altered from Extraordinary to Ordinary, so was the Means of Conveyance.
And

And God, that committed the Divine Oracles to be taught by Persons whom he thought fit to inspire, employed the same Persons to commit that Revelation to Writing for the future Preservation of it, and the conveying it down safe and entire to Posterity. Without which, Mankind, in these Circumstance, neither could themselves have been certain of what they were to believe, nor could they have sufficiently proved to others what it was they were obliged to receive and to believe, as wanting Authentick Monuments and Records for it. So that we have sufficient Reason to believe, that the same Divine Goodness that did make known his Will to Mankind, would take the best Means, and did take the best Means for the continuing and preserving it.

And Scripture being the only Means of that kind, becomes a Rule of Faith; and so is of Authority sufficient to oblige us to receive and obey it.

If the Matter of Scripture be true, and of Divine Inspiration, we are obliged by it, though the Writing, or Book containing it, should be only of Human Composition; because it is the Doctrine, and not the Way of Delivery, that passes the immediate Obligation upon us: But when the Book containing that Matter, as well as the Matter it self, is of Divine Authority, and composed by Divine Appointment,

~
Sermon
VI.

ment, Direction, or Inspiration, it obligeth us by Virtue of the Composition, as well as the Matter; and both are to be jointly received, as proceeding from one and the same Original and Authority.

But having asserted this, That the Scripture is the only Means of Conveyance of the Will of God to Mankind, and what becomes a Rule of Faith to us; it is fit to return to the Question proposed, *viz.*

How we can prove the Scripture to have been of Divine Revelation; or that those Books, so called, were wrote by the Direction and Command of God, or by Inspiration from him?

A. I. I Answer in the same Way as before, That as there is no Revelation, if the Scriptural Revelation be not that Revelation; so there is no written Revelation, if the Scripture be not that Book, and be not Inspired. And then we should want the only certain Means of Conveyance, which is Writing, or should have been wholly left to the doubtful and uncertain Hand of Tradition, for the Knowledge and Preservation of Revelation.

Now I think this to be an Argument of considerable Force for the Divine Authority of Scripture; that without this Means we should after a Revelation be in Effect without a Revelation: For so it will

will be, if the Scripture contain not that Revelation, and that we have no sufficient Record, if that be not the Authentick Record of it.

Sermon
VI.

But to come nearer the Point:

2. I Answer, That there is as much Proof for the Inspiration of the Scripture, as the Matter is well capable of, and as much as is sufficient; and if that be so, then 'tis unreasonable to reject it; for they who do so, can do it upon no less Pretence, than that they would have such a Proof as the Matter is not capable of, and more than is sufficient for the Proof of it. But that there is such a Proof for the Divine Authority of Scripture as is sufficient, I think, will be evident, if we shew,

First, That the Scriptures have, for Proof of their Inspiration, the Testimony of such as were Inspired.

Secondly, That they were written by Persons Inspired, and that were Inspired when they writ them.

Thirdly, That they are worthy of such Authors, and have upon them the Characters of such Inspiration.

I. The Scriptures have, for Proof of their Inspiration, the Testimony of such as were Inspired. The Testimony of Per-

~
Sermon
VI.

sons Inspired is as much a Proof of Inspiration, as if it had been a Matter they themselves were Inspired with; and therefore the Evidence that we have for the Inspiration of such Persons, is a sufficient Evidence for the Inspiration they give Testimony to. As for Instance; Suppose that we have not as good Evidence for the Inspiration of the Old Testament, as we have for the New; yet if the New doth justify the Inspiration of the Old, quotes it as such, and bestows that Character upon it; then by Virtue of such a Testimony, we have as good Evidence for the Old, as we have for the New. The meer Quotation of a Book by an Inspired Person, whether as to the Author, Words, or Matter, doth not give the like Authority to that with what he himself doth write by Divine Inspiration; for then *Aratus* and *Menander*, *Epimenides* and *Callimachus*, who were Heathens, and are quoted by *St. Paul*, would become Inspired Writers.

Aets 17.

28.

1 Cor. 15.

33.

Tit. 1. 12.

But the Scriptures of the Old Testament are cited by our Saviour and the Apostles as the Oracles of God, and as Books of Divine Authority, and which they produce and appeal to upon all Occasions in Justification of the Doctrine which they taught: So we are told, that *all Scripture*, *πᾶσα γραφή*, or the whole Scripture (as *Dionysius Carthus.* expounds it) is given by Inspiration of God.

2 Tim. 3.

15, 16.

And

And what is meant by the Scripture, ^{Sermon VI.} is no other than what was generally received by the *Jewish* Church as such, and which our Saviour distributes after their ^{Luke 24. 44.} Manner into the Three known Parts, *viz.*

The Law of *Moses*, the *Prophets*, and the ^{V. Josephus con. App. l. i.} *Psalms*: Which Division comprehended in it all the several Books; the *Prophets* containing not only the Books properly so called, but also the Historical, as written by Inspired Persons; and the *Psalms* containing all the Poetical.

And they descend yet lower; for of the Thirty nine Books of the Old Testament, there are very few, not above Seven or Eight, but what are quoted in the New Testament by Name, or for some remarkable Passage, and as Books of the same Character.

So that if we can prove our Saviour to be Infallible, and the Evangelists and Apostles Inspired, (as we have done before, when we proved the Matter revealed by them to have been of Divine Authority) at the same Time we prove the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be of Divine Inspiration, because they had this Testimony and Credit given to them by those that were themselves Infallible and Inspired.

The like Testimony have we for the Divine Authority of St. *Paul's* Epistles, by St. *Peter*, who gives them the same ^{2 Pet. 3. 15, 16.} Title

~
Sermon
VI.

Title of *Scripture* with the Books that were of the *Jewish Canon*; *Our beloved brother Paul*, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you, as also in all his *Epistles*: -----Which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as also the *Other Scriptures*.

But though this be a good and sufficient Proof where it may be had, yet it is not applicable to all; since the last of the Inspired Writers could have no such Evidence; as *Malachi* among the *Jews*; and *St. John* in the Primitive Church, who survived all the rest of the Divine Penmen. And therefore, where this Proof of the Attestation given to some is wanting as to others, we must have Recourse to other Arguments that will supply what is deficient. The Old Testament has the Testimony of the New to vouch for its Divine Authority; but what can this testify to the New, when there is no other Revelation, and no Inspired Persons to come after.

But this will be help'd by the next Evidence, which is, That

II. The Scriptures were written by Persons Inspired, and that were Inspired in the Writing of them.

(1.) They were written by Persons Inspired: Thereby is meant, that whoever were the Authors, known or unknown,

we

we have yet good and sufficient Evidence, that the Penmen were Inspired both as to the Matter, and Manner or Way of Writing. (But this belongs to another Place). Or that the Authors of those Books were the same that before taught by Inspiration.

That the Writers of the Old Testament were of this Kind, we have already proved from the Testimony of the New, as far as that is of Authority to verify it.

And that the Evangelists and Apostles, whom we have before proved to be Inspired, were the Authors of the Books of the New Testament, we have as good Assurance as the *Jews* had, that the *Pentateuch* was written by *Moses*, or the *Psalms* by *David*; or that ever there were such Philosophers as *Plato* and *Aristotle*, or such Physicians as *Hippocrates* and *Galen*, or any Books writ by them.

Nay, so much the stronger Evidence have we, as it has been the Duty (as they thought) and the Interest of so considerable a Part of Mankind as the Christians are, to preserve these Records safe and entire, and to take Care that they be such in all Points as they received them; and consequently according to their Sense of them they are of Divine Inspiration, and wrote by those Inspired Persons. And for which, there can be no greater Evidence than this Sort of Tradition; unless we would have God reveal to every particular

Particular Person, That the Authors of those
 Sermon VI. Books were Inspired; or point it out by
 some special Miracles, which shall serve
 as the Star to the Wise Men, to direct us
 to it.

But since this is wanting, and cannot
 reasonably be expected, we must rest sa-
 tisfied with that which is the only possible
 Evidence, and which not only the Primi-
 tive Christians did admit as sufficient, but
 was not contested by the most violent Ad-
 versaries of their Religion: Among whom
 the Question was not, Whether the Per-
 sons reputed to be Inspired, were the Au-
 thors of those Books? or, Whether those
 whose Authors are not known, were of
 the same Condition with those that were
 known? but, Whether the Matters of
 that supposed Revelation, and contained
 in those Books, were true, and that those
 Authors were sincere Relaters of it?

V. Euseb.
Eccles. Hist.
 l. 23.
 c. 24, 25.
 l. 5. c. 8.
 l. 7. c. 24.
 &c.

And whereas there were some Books
 of Scripture that were not so early and
 universally embraced as others, yet they
 were not so much doubted of as to their
 Authority, as the Authors (such as the
 Epistle to the *Hebrews*, the Second and
 Third of *St. John*, and the *Revelation*);
 unless it were by the *Alogi* that *Epiphanus*
 writes of, who rejected the Works of
St. John as not agreeable to their Opinion,
 That Christ was a mere Man.

(2.) The

(2.) The Sacred Penmen were Inspired in their Writing, in the Sense before spoken of, p. 177. For,  Sermon VI.

1. There was as much need to Write, as to Teach; to Write with Respect to the Absent, and to Posterity; as to Teach and Preach to the Present; for there is no other Way to Teach in those Cases, than by Tradition or Writing. But the Defect which those Holy Men found all their Discourses labour'd under as to their Conveyance by Tradition, through the Infirmary of Human Nature, and an Incapacity of transmitting the Matters now contained in the Scriptures, to future Ages in that Way, without Prejudice, Corruption, and Abuse, dispos'd them, under the Direction of the Holy Spirit, to commit them to Writing. So St. John 20. 31. *These things are written that ye might believe.* So St. Peter, 2 Pet. 1. 5. *I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.*

2. There was as much need to Write by Inspiration, as to Teach by Inspiration, for Writing is but another Way of Teaching. And if the Apostles had the Assistance of the Holy Ghost in all Matters of Moment when they Taught, it is reasonable to suppose (had we no other Evidence for it) that in the same Circumstances they had the same Assistance in what they writ.

Nay,

~
Sermon
VI.

Nay, so much the more might it reasonably be expected, that they should have the Assistance of that Divine Power operating upon their Minds, and guiding, as it were, their Pen in what they Writ; as what they Writ was to continue in the Church, and to be a Standard of Faith, and Rule of Life to all Ages: Whereas what they Taught could continue no longer than the Memories of fallible Men could retain it.

So that we may conclude, That if they Taught and Preach'd by the special Assistance of the Holy Spirit, they were also under the Conduct of it when they Writ.

3. Those Divine Penmen conceived themselves to be alike Inspired in what they Writ, as in what they Taught. Therefore we generally find the Apostles, and St. Paul always, unless when he writes in Conjunction with others, to begin their Epistles with a Declaration of their Commission and Authority by Virtue of their Office, *Paul an Apostle*, &c. requiring the same Regard and the like Submission to what they Writ, as to what they Spoke when present.

And as they thus magnified their Office, so they writ as from Christ himself; after this and the like Form, *Grace be to you, and peace from God our father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, Rom. I. 7, &c.

Phil. I. I.
1 & 2
Thes.

Nay,

Nay, they insist upon their Inspiration, which they received when they writ, to gain it Authority with those they wrote to. So St. Paul, Gal. 1. 1. *Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, &c.* Ver. 11. 12. *I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man; for I neither received it of man, nor was I taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ.* And that Apostle expressly saith, *The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord,* 1 Cor. 14. 37. 2 Cor. 1. 13.

Sermon
VI.

So St. Peter, 1 Epist. 5. 12. *I have written briefly, exhorting and testifying, that this is the true grace of God, wherein ye stand.*

Now if they conceived themselves to be Inspired in Writing, who themselves were Inspired (as has been before proved) and did Write with the same Apostolical Authority as they Taught, it is certain that they were Inspired in Writing; for they were the best Judges of their own Inspiration, and could best know when they were Inspired. And therefore if any would undertake to disprove the Divine Authority or Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, they must first of all prove that those Writers were not Inspired, nor did ever give sufficient Evidence that they were Inspired. But if they were Inspired, and do withal declare that they wrote those Books by Inspiration, we have

Nay,

Sermon
VI.

have as much Reason to receive those Books as such upon their Affirmation, as we have to believe that they themselves were Inspired, or did ever Teach by Inspiration.

4. There is the same Proof for the Inspiration of the Apostolical Writers, in their Writing, as their Teaching, as what they Write is the same with what they Taught; and therefore what they Taught being confirmed by sufficient Evidence to be from God, so must what they Writ; the same Proofs that belong to the one, belonging to the other. And accordingly they in their Writings often appeal to what they Taught, as concordant with what they Writ, and to the Testimony given to the one for the Confirmation of the other.

They appeal to what they Taught: So St. Paul, 2 Cor. 2. 13. *I write none other things to you, than what you read, or know and acknowledge.* So Gal. 1. 8, 9. *Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

So they appeal to the Evidences of their Inspiration in Teaching, for a Confirmation of what they Writ: So 2 Cor. 12. 12. *Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, and signs and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Gal. 3. 5. *He that ministreth to you the Spirit, and*
worketh

worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the Law, or the bearing of Faith? From whence it is that the Apostles challenge the same Regard to be paid to their Writings, as their Teaching; which they could not have done, were not their Writings of as good Authority as their Teaching, and were not they alike directed and assisted in the one as the other. So St. Paul, 1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, or Apostles.* 1 Cor. 5. 3, 4. *I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already as though I were present, &c. in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, &c.*

All which is to give Authority to what they writ; but what Authority could that be of to oblige others to receive it, if they themselves received it not by Inspiration, and that their Teaching and Writing were not the same, and obtained in the same Way?

III. The Holy Scriptures are worthy of such Authors as were Inspired, and have upon them the Characters of such Inspiration.

I have before proved, That the Matter contained in Scripture has upon it the Characters of a Divine Revelation. But the Design before us now, is to shew, That the Writing it self has upon it such

Lecture V.

Char-

Sermon
VI.

Amos 7.

14.

Characters as will entitle it to Divine Inspiration, and is worthy of such Persons to Write, as were Inspired. And that,

I. If we consider who the Persons were that were the Penmen of the Sacred Writ; that were as well Ignorant and Illiterate, as Learned. Thus we find in the Old Testament, an *Amos* that was no Prophet, nor Prophet's Son, nor bred up in their Schools, but an Herdman, and Gatherer of *Sycamore-Fruit*, is made at once a Prophet, and as Inspired, as the Great, the Noble, and Eloquent *Isaiah*: And under the Gospel, we find a *Matthew* and a *John*, as well as a *Luke*; a *Peter*, as well as a *Paul*. For when the Workmanship proceeds not from the Hand, but the Intelligent Mind; not from the Instrument, but the Efficient; it is not what the Hand, the Instrument, and Agent is, but what the Efficient pleases; and so God could make an Apostle and an Inspired Person out of an Illiterate Fisherman, as well as out of him that sat at the Feet of *Gamaliel*. For God chose the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, &c. that no flesh should glory in his presence, 1 Cor. I. 27.

And as it was in Preaching, so it is in Writing the Gospel, in which God no less gave them a Mind to indite, than a Mouth

Mouth and Wisdom in Teaching to speak. So that they needed no more to meditate before what to write, than in that Case what they should answer. It was there *as the Spirit gave them utterance,* and here as that did direct, and assist, or suggest. St. Paul exhorts Timothy, to give attendance to reading, till he himself should come to give him farther Instruction; and to meditate and give himself wholly to them, that his profiting might appear to all, 1 Tim. 4. 13, &c. But we find no such Dependance on Human Means in what they wrote: Then it is Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus, and God the Father; the Gospel he wrote was the same he taught; and which, when he wrote, he no more received from Man, than when he taught, and which he was taught by the revelation of Jesus Christ, Gal. 1. 1, 11, 12.

Sermon
VI.
Luke 11.
14, 15.

And therefore where all was by Revelation, it was not as the Man was, but as he was made: And as St. Peter was as much an Apostle, an Inspired Teacher, so he was as much a Divine Writer as St. Paul, and writes with the same Divine Power and Authority, and with as much Certainty and Infallibility.

So that there are as few Objections (if we strictly consider it) made against the most Illiterate, as the most Learned of the Inspired Writers; against St. Matthew and

Sermon
VI.

St. John, as against St. Luke; against St. Peter, as St. Paul. But now if those Writers had wrote *after man* (in St. Paul's Phrase) and purely from themselves; as it was naturally impossible that ever those Unlearned Persons should apply themselves to study at the Age of St. Peter, and write of the most sublime Arguments more to the Satisfaction of Mankind than the profoundest Philosophers; so it was impossible but that in their Compositions they should have been guilty of manifold Mistakes, when they wrote of such various Points, and Points of no small Difficulty to explicate. But when the Unlearned of them are as free from Error as the Learned, and as little liable to Exception in what they writ, 'tis evident they writ from the same Spirit with, and had the same Assistance as the Learned.

And therefore the supposed Errors in any of them could not proceed from Inadvertency, or Unskilfulness, or Want of right Information; but are rather Errors supposed and imaginary, than real; the Mistakes of the Reader or Transcriber, rather than of the Penmen; as we have already shewed, (*Serm. IV.*)

For if the Errors had proceeded immediately from the Writer, they would have appeared more in the Composure of the Unlearned than the Learned: But when the Unlearned are as free from them

as the Learned, 'tis an unquestionable Sign that the Unlearned wrote from the same Spirit as the Learned, and both from a Spirit that is Divine.

2. The Scriptures will appear to be worthy of such Authors as are Inspired, if we consider the Way in which they are written, which though not with *excellency of speech, or of wisdom* that is Human, yet have such a Majesty and Authority shining through the Whole, as gives them a Lustre as much beyond other Books, as the Bodies of Angels which they assumed for some special Service excelled those of Mortals, and that were of a Natural Composition; and of which we may say, in the like Phrase as *Nicodemus* of our Saviour, That none could write after this Manner, *except God were with them.*

1 Cor. 2.
1, 4.

I freely acknowledge, that they are not written according to the ordinary Rules of Art and Method, which Almighty God is no more obliged to observe, than he is to govern the World by the Methods and Rules that are ordinarily observed among Mankind.

For as in the Government of the World, where there are different Ends to pursue, and divers Means to be made use of, God confines not himself to act as we would in such Cases, but acts above all Rule known to us, and sometimes punishes

~
 Sermon
 VI.

where we would spare, and spares where we would punish; sometimes gives to those that we would deprive of such Favours, and deprives those of them to whom we should think fit to give: So it is in the Divine Composures, in which he makes Use of different Hands and Instruments, as there are different Tempers in Mankind: He makes Use of the Poetical Vein in *David*, the Oratory of an *Isaiah*, the Rusticity of an *Amos*, the Elegancy of a *Luke*, and the Plainness of a *Peter*, the Profoundness of a *Paul*, to serve the common Design of instructing Mankind in the Knowledge of God, and their Duty to him, without that Artificial Method which the Learned Part of the World expect to find, and think fit to observe.

The Heavens and the Earth have upon them the Signatures of an Almighty Power and Wisdom, and which we may with *David* employ our most serious Hours in the Contemplation of, with Pleasure and Advantage. But yet there is no strict Order visible to us, nor can be observed by us in the Situation of the Constellations; nor can we give a Reason why *Orion* and the *Pleiades*, or *Arcturus*, are placed in that Quarter of the Heavens which is assigned them: And the Earth is not like a Garden laid out in Order, but rather there seems to us a rude Variety in the Disposition of it; and yet notwithstanding,

who

who is there that doth not, under all these seeming Disadvantages, find out the Traces of a Divine Original, and enough to entitle God to the Creation of all? And so it is in the Holy Scriptures, where there often seems wanting the Accomplishments of Human Eloquence, *the enticing words of man's wisdom*, and that Decorum and Artifice which the Books of Human Contrivance and Invention are embellished with: But as the Apostle saith, when he declined *the words which man's wisdom* (whether of Philosophers or Orators) *teacheth*, it was that their Faith might stand 1 Cor. 2. *not in the wisdom of men, but in the power* 4, 5. *of God*: So we may see under the Veil of a seeming Irregularity so much Beauty shining forth, and Experiment so much Virtue proceeding from it, that it will evidently appear, that the less there is of Man in the Composure, the more there is of God, and that it can have none for its Author and Inditer but him; and which Irregularity can no more detract from the Authority and Divine Inspiration of the Scripture, than it can be questioned whether the Sun be the Fountain of Light, because of what we, that are at a vast Distance from it, call Spots. For we are at a great Distance from the Apostolical Age, and much more from the latest Times of the Inspired Writers of the Old Testament, and so must needs

~
Sermon
VI.

be under some Difficulties from our Unacquaintedness with the Style and Way of Writing, as well as the Customs of those Ages. And there will be therefore some Spots and dark Places in them as there are in the Sun, not for Want of Light and Elegance originally in them, no more than for Want of Light in the Sun; but because of some Deficiency in our selves, that are at a Distance, and under such Circumstances as intercept our Sight, and hinder us from making true and exact Observations. But if we could but stand, as we are to judge of Pictures, in the same Light in which they were drawn, and had lived in the same Ages in which those Books were written, we should be able to make a much truer Judgment, and penetrate much farther into the Meaning of them, than we now can do.

But now though all the Parts of Scripture are not equally alike, but like the Inspired Writers themselves, of whom some were bred up in the Nurseries of Learning, and others fetch'd from the Fishery and the Sheepfold; yet are they all plain in the same essential Doctrine, and in which the Salvation of Mankind is concerned.

And not only so, but the Style and Order of Words, if thoroughly understood as to their Propriety, Elegance, and Use, would

would be very surprizing (if we may judge of what we do not know, by what we do); which has not been unobserved even by some of the Heathens. It was *Dionysius Longinus* the Rhetorician, that admired the Majesty and Sublimity of *Moses's* Way of Writing. It was *Ammelinus* the Platonist, that at the same Time as he called *St. John* a *Barbarian* (a Title which the *Greeks* and *Romans* bestowed upon all but themselves), found in his Gospel the Wisdom of a Philosopher.

Sermon
VI.

But above all, we may see the Footsteps of a Divine and Extraordinary Assistance in the admirable Discourses of our Saviour and the Apostles upon several Occasions. Let us, for Instance, take a View of our Saviour's last Discourse with the Disciples just before his Death, as recorded by *St. John*, chap. 14. &c. Turn we again to that of *St. Paul* about a Future State, and a Resurrection to it, which is the Subject of *1 Cor.* 15. See it again in the Close and sensible Argumentations of the Author to the *Hebrews*. See it also in the very Digressions which those Holy Penmen sometimes, by breaking off from their Subject in Hand for a while, do fall upon; where we shall find that which is equivalent to what is ordinarily said by the Prophets in the Messages they delivered, *Thus saith the Lord*; and what is as expressly said, and will as much be found to

~
Sermon
VI.

Theol. Po-
dit. c. 8.

to be of Divine Revelation. It was certainly as much an Effect of the Divine Power to Direct, and Assist, and even Inspire those Writers with such sublime Notions, such convincing Arguments, as it was of the Divine Commission to send the Prophets with Authority to publish the Divine Commands and Decrees. And therefore it is a very frivolous Exception which a late Author makes against the Divine Authority of the Apostolical Writings, That they consist of long Deductions and Argumentations; whereas, saith he, *God doth not reason, but command*, as he did by the Prophets. But how often do we find in the Prophets God arguing with the *Jews* about the Vanity of their Idolatry, from the Incomprehensible Perfections of his Nature, &c.? How often using Arguments to convince them of their Immoralities and Impieties? How often exhorting them to Repentance and Reformation, from the most powerful Considerations? And therefore why are the Apostles less inspired for that Reason than the Prophets? When God speaks to Men, and teaches one Man by another, it is often after the Manner of Men; and therefore as he doth sometimes require absolute Obedience to his Commands, so at other Times he condescends so far as to shew them the Equity and the Reasonableness of them, both equally becoming the Di-

vine

vine Majesty, and which are a glorious Instance of the Divine Wisdom conspicuous throughout the Holy Scripture; thereby adding both to the Excellency and the Usefulness of it; and advancing it in both above any Book in the World. And for this, take the Word of one (who is otherwise no Friend to our Religion, or to the Divine Authority of the Scriptures) though in Contradiction to himself.

Sermon
VI.

*Anima
Mundi,
Sect. 1.*

“ As the Lustre of an Oriental Diamond is more clearly perceived, when compared with counterfeit Stones; so Christianity appears in its greatest Glory and Splendor, when compared with the Obscurity of Paganism; the Defor- mity of the one serving as a Foil to the other. Nor doth the Divinity of the Scriptures ever better appear, than when compared with the Follies of the *Talmud*, the *Alchoran*, or the Constitutions of the Heathen Lawgivers; which is an infallible Sign of their Excellence, that they so well bear the Test of Comparison. Thus far he.

IV. General.

How we prove the Books that are now extant, and received by the Christian Church as Canonical, to be those very Books that were writ by Persons Inspired?

Now

~
Sermon
VI.

Now this will receive a sufficient Answer, if we prove,

1. That there were once such Books.
2. That these are the very Books which were once said to be Canonical and Inspired.

3. That these Books are not corrupted, so as not to be the Books now which once they were.

1. The First of these is not denied by the most violent Adversaries, such as *Appion* was to the *Jews*, and *Celsus* to the *Christians*.

2. That these are the Books which were heretofore Penn'd by Inspired Persons, and received by the Universal Church as such, we have as much Evidence as we have or can have for any Thing past or distant in Time or Place from us, and which we our selves have not seen: And if we call in question the Sufficiency of the Evidence, or the Truth of what is proved by it, we take away all the Evidence that we can have, and the Truth and Certainty of whatever has been, or is, which we have not seen our selves. So that either these are those Books, or there is nothing of that Kind which we can depend upon.

3. These Books are uncorrupted; I mean, by Design, or Accident.

If by Design, it must either be by *Jews*, *Hereticks*, or those that are called *Orthodox*.
I. If

1. If by the *Jews*, that must either be before the Time of our Saviour, or after it. If before, they would have certainly been taxed for it by our Saviour and the Apostles, who upon all Occasions appeal to the Scriptures; and yet never charge them with any such Falsifications.

~
Sermon
VI.

If they were corrupted by the *Jews* after our Saviour's Time, How came they to leave those Prophecies uncorrupted, which manifestly and principally prove our Saviour to be the Messiah? For surely if they adulterated, or expunged, or added to the less, they would have offered as much Violence to the greater. But it is evident the *Jews* were in a high Degree superstitious, in preserving the Copies of the Scripture sound and entire.

V. Philo
de Egressu
Israel. ex
Egypto.

Or if they would have attempted this, how could they do it, and not be discovered and challenged for it by the Christians, who from that Time forward had the Scriptures of the Old Testament in their Custody, as well as themselves?

2. It could not be by the Hereticks, because the Scriptures were soon dispersed over all the Christian World, and were read both in publick and private; and with that Care and Faithfulness, that they chose rather to part with their Lives, than become *Traditores*, and deliver up their Bibles to be burnt; and keeping then so watchful an Eye upon them, they could

not

~
Sermon
VI.

not be perverted by their fraudulent Arts, but they would soon be observed and complained of; especially by those whose Office it was above others to study and preserve them.

Irenæus,

l. 1. c. 29.

Tertul.

contra

Marcion.

l. 5. Epi-

phan. Her.

42.

So when *Marcion* falsified the Text, he was presently detected and exposed for it.

3. Nor could it be by the Orthodox; if any of them were so weak as to think to serve their Cause by it: For as to the Old Testament, they were as watchfully observed by the *Jews*, as the *Jews* were by them; and both the Copies of the Old and New were so soon and so far dispersed, that neither could any one attempt it with any Likelihood of Success, nor all agree in it, when impossible to convene for it.

And therefore when *Manichæus* and his Followers pretended the Corruption of the Scripture in their own Vindication, they could not make out their Charge, though provoked by *St. Austin*, &c. to it.

Aug. de

util. Cred.

c. 3.

Use. We may observe from hence, what a Blessing we enjoy above the Ages of Tradition, when the Knowledge of the Truth was conveyed from Hand to Hand; which so sensibly declined, that the Truth was soon turned into Fable, and that so few Years after the Flood as the Time of *Terah*, the greatest Part of the World was over-run with Idolatry;

so

So that for the retrieving it, God drew *Abraham* out of that infected Mass, and enjoined him to set up a Family separated from the rest of the World, that out of that he might constitute a Church for his Service.

But we have that which those Ages wanted, a written and certain Rule for our Faith and Manners; and that so plainly and intelligibly wrote, and so completely and entirely furnished with all Things necessary for us to know, in order to the Happiness of another Life; that as none in the Christian Church (where the Guides and Teachers are faithful to their Flock) can be, or must unavoidably be ignorant; so neither can any Person be defective in the Knowledge of his Duty, or void and destitute of a Power of doing what is necessary towards his Happiness, unless by his own Fault. If we keep but to our Rule, that is as an Infallible Compass to direct us, and we shall never fall short of knowing what God has revealed, or of obtaining what he hath promised.

And here we may farther reflect upon our Happiness in this Church, that we have not the *Key of Knowledge* taken from us, and the Truth lock'd up in an Unknown Tongue (as in the Church of *Rome*), but plainly and faithfully rendred

in our own Language, for the Instruction
 and Edification of all.

What remains then, but that we make
 this our daily Study, and labour to ac-
 quaint our selves with the Rich Treasures
 of Useful and Necessary Knowledge con-
 tained in those Sacred Repositories, and
 making them as *David* did, a *Lamp to our
 feet*, and endeavouring to conform our
 selves in all Points to their holy Prescrip-
 tions; and then we shall most certainly
 have Reason to rejoice in the Comfort of
 the Promises, and with Patience look for
*that blessed hope and glorious appearance of the
 great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*

To whom, &c.

SER.

SERMON VII.

HEB. I. 1, 2.

God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.

IN these words we have (as I have before shewed)

1. A description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*, or declaring his Will to Mankind.

2. The Certainty of that Revelation, 'tis by way of Declaration, *God who at sundry times, &c. spake.*

3. The Order observed in that Revelation, as to Time, Manner, and Persons; *In time past by the Prophets, and in the last days by his Son.*

P

4. The

4. The Perfection and Completion of
 Sermon all, 'tis *in these last days by his Son.*

VII.

It's the Third that I am at this time to enter upon; *viz.*

The Order observed in that Revelation, &c.

Where, according to the Method laid down in the beginning of these Lectures,

1. I am to consider the several ways by which God did reveal himself *in time past by the Prophets*; as by Inspirations, Visions, &c.

2. I am to shew the difference between Divine Inspirations on one hand, and Diabolical Illusions, Natural Impressions, and Delusory Imaginations on the other.

3. I am to consider the several Periods of Divine Revelation, before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel; and the gradual Progress of it from first to last, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual respect one had to the other.

4. I am to shew why God did thus gradually, and at *sundry times*, proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind, and not at first and at once, as fully and perfectly as he did at last *by his Son.*

1. I am to consider the several Ways by which God did reveal himself in time past by the Prophets.

When

The several Ways of Revelation. 211

When we are treating of Revelation, we are to consider that it is like Light,  to be known by it self; and that the best way therefore is to take the Scripture it self for our Guide in the matters belonging thereunto; without which, how Learnedly soever Men may discourse upon this Argument, 'tis to as little purpose as if we should go about to compile a History of the Invisible World, and of all the Transactions in it from time to time, which we have no Conversation nor Acquaintance with. Sermon VII.

We see how Vain (though Ingenious) the Attempts of many Inquisitive Persons have been, notwithstanding the Improvements by Telescopes, &c. for their assistance, to give us any tolerable Account of the Solar and Lunary Worlds; and after much and indefatigable Pains, they are not able to say this is Land, and that Water; or whether neither of the two.

And we talk as much at random, when we leave the beaten Track of Scripture, and think to find out by our own Reason what we must understand by Revelation alone. We can only think and discourse of such Subjects, as we keep that Clue in our hand; and therefore laying aside all manner of Conjectures, and the Speculations


~~~~~  
 Sermon VII. *culations of the Jewish or Christian Rabbies upon the Argument in hand, I shall solely keep my self to the Rule of Scripture.*

All I pretend, is to compare Scripture with it self, and to try if by putting these things together, and laying them in order, I can contribute any thing to the Explication of so obscure and intricate an Argument.

There are several Terms made use of in Scripture with reference to this Subject, and for the signification of the way by which God did reveal and make himself known to Mankind; and they are, *Inspiration, Vision, Dreams, and Voices.*

I. *Inspiration.* So *Job* [32. 8.] saith, *The inspiration of the Almighty gave them [men] understanding.*

And the Scripture is said to have been given *by Inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Now it seems to be called Inspiration, because it is insensibly communicated and breathed as it were into the Soul, as the Soul was into the Body; to which the Phrase in *Job* has a plain reference, where the same word נשנ is used, which is used *Gen.* 2. 7. when God is said to *breathe into Adam the breath of Life*: And by which term it is properly and evidently distinguished from all the other Species

## *The several Ways of Revelation.* 213

Species of Divine Communications. For all the rest are sensible ways, whether by Representation, as Visions or Dreams; or by Action, as Voices; but this comes as Life came into the Body, or Air comes into the Lungs, without any such kind of Perception or Sensation. VII.

Now there is a Threefold Inspiration;

(1.) That which is purely Natural: So 'tis said of God, *who hath put wisdom into the inward parts*, Job 38. 36. And he is said to *instruct the plowman to discretion*, Isa. 28. 26. This is no other than a Disposition infused, and connatural with the Soul it self; and that afterward in process of time ripens, and comes to be a Power or Principle, and even a Habit, by action and observation.

(2.) There is a Providential Inspiration; when God by some After-Act of his Providence, and for some special Service, doth either give Life to such a Natural Power and inherent Disposition, or else infuses a new Disposition or Power into the Soul. This seems to have been the Case of *Bezaleel*, and *Aholiab*, and others, into whom God is said to have put wisdom and understanding, to know how to work all manner of Work; and yet of the same Persons 'tis said, whose

Exod. 31.  
3, &c.


 culations of the *Jewish* or *Christian Rab-*  
 bies upon the Argument in hand, I  
 shall solely keep my self to the Rule of  
 Scripture.

Sermon  
 VII.

All I pretend, is to compare Scrip-  
 ture with it self, and to try if by put-  
 ting these things together, and laying  
 them in order, I can contribute any thing  
 to the Explication of so obscure and in-  
 tricate an Argument.

There are several Terms made use of  
 in Scripture with reference to this Sub-  
 ject, and for the signification of the way  
 by which God did reveal and make him-  
 self known to Mankind; and they are,  
*Inspiration, Vision, Dreams, and Voices.*

I. *Inspiration.* So *Job* [32. 8.] saith,  
*The inspiration of the Almighty gave them*  
*[men] understanding.*

And the Scripture is said to have been  
 given by *Inspiration of God*, 2 Tim. 3. 16.

Now it seems to be called *Inspiration*,  
 because it is insensibly communicated and  
 breathed as it were into the Soul, as the  
 Soul was into the Body; to which the  
 Phrase in *Job* has a plain reference, where  
 the same word נשם is used, which is  
 used Gen. 2. 7. when God is said to  
*breathe into Adam the breath of Life:*  
 And by which term it is properly and  
 evidently distinguished from all the other  
 Species



*The several Ways of Revelation.* 213

Species of Divine Communications. For all the rest are sensible ways, whether by Representation, as Visions or Dreams; or by Action, as Voices; but this comes as Life came into the Body, or Air comes into the Lungs, without any such kind of Perception or Sensation. Sermon VII.

Now there is a Threefold Inspiration;

(1.) That which is purely Natural: So 'tis said of God, *who hath put wisdom into the inward parts*, Job 38. 36. And he is said to *instruct the plowman to discretion*, Isa. 28. 26. This is no other than a Disposition infused, and connatural with the Soul it self; and that afterward in process of time ripens, and comes to be a Power or Principle, and even a Habit, by action and observation.

(2.) There is a Providential Inspiration; when God by some After-Act of his Providence, and for some special Service, doth either give Life to such a Natural Power and inherent Disposition, or else infuses a new Disposition or Power into the Soul. This seems to have been the Case of *Bezaleel*, and *Aboliab*, and others, into whom God is said to have put *wisdom and understanding*, to know how to work all manner of Work; and yet of the same Persons 'tis said, whose

Exod. 31.  
3, &c.

 heart stirred them up, *Exod. 36. 1, 2.*  
 Sermon That is, God did chuse them out, as be-  
 VII. ing of themselves well disposed and fitted  
 for that Employment, and after an Ex-  
 traordinary Manner, and by a Superna-  
 tural Assistance qualified them farther  
 for it. And from the Consideration of  
 the difference between Men and Men,  
 and indeed between a Man and himself,  
 when from some imperceptible beginning  
 he comes to advance beyond others, and  
 even beyond himself in Knowledge, Wis-  
 dom, and Success, the World has been  
 inclin'd to think there was somewhat of  
 a peculiar Inspiration in it. Whence that  
 Saying of the Heathen Orator, *Nemo Vir*  
*Magnus sine afflatu Divino unquam fuit:*  
 No one ever came to be a Great Man, or  
 attained to any extraordinary Eminence  
 in Knowledge or Skill, but by a Divine  
 Illumination.

Cic. l. 2.  
 de Nat.  
 Deor.

(3.) There is an Inspiration purely  
 Supernatural; that is immediately, wholly,  
 and only from God. Of this sort is that  
 Divine Influx commonly known by the  
 term of *Regeneration*, when God so  
 changes the Heart by the Powerful Ope-  
 ration of his Holy Spirit, that it's said  
 to be New, *Ezek. 36. 26.*

But that which is more to our purpose,  
 is when God in *Daniel's* Phrase, *ch. 2. 22.*  
reveal-

revealeth the deep and secret things, and doth communicate his Will, so that the Person conceives, and thinks, and acts, as the Divine Power would have him conceive, think, and act. Sermon VII.

It being here, as with the Soul in the Body, which is the Principle of all Vital Motion; for though the Body be in its contrivance admirably adapted for all Offices to which the Organs of it are to serve, if there were a Soul in it; yet it is the Soul that must make the Eye to see, and the Foot to move, and the Tongue to speak, or else there will be no Sight, Motion, nor Speech.

So it is here in Divine Inspiration of this sort, where the Spirit of God is to the Soul, what the Soul is to the Body, and must make all those Impressions upon it, must infuse the Power of conceiving and thinking, or rather those Conceptions and Thoughts, those Notions and Ideas of Things, nay, that Matter. So that the Person inspired doth not think his own Thoughts, nor order his own Conceptions, nor form his own Notions, nor use his own Words (where these are Inspired) as far as he is Inspired. Not that his Reason is not in operation, (as it is in Raptures, Visions, and Dreams, where the Rational Powers are bound up



## 216 *The several Ways of Revelation.*

as it were by Sleep for the present), but Sermon that these Infusions proceeding not from

VII. any Reasoning in themselves, but from an External and Supernatural Cause, it is by that Cause determined to the Matter that is Inspired.

As a Prompter doth suggest the Matter, or dictate the Words to the Interpreter he makes use of; which are not to be esteemed the Words or Thoughts of the Interpreter, but of the Suggester. As our Saviour saith to his Disciples, *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak: For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of the Father which speaketh in you.* Matth. 10. 19, 20.

Now as it was the Spirit of God speaking in them, that did in that case dictate and guide them in all they said, so that they spake with such Authority and Ability, such Wisdom and Elocution, without any Premeditation, as all their Adversaries were not able to *gainsay or resist*, Luke 21. 15. (as we find in the Instance of St. Stephen, Acts 6. 10.)

So it was after the same manner that the Divine Spirit did breathe upon the mind (as our Saviour on the Apostles in an external way, the signification of the internal,

internal, *John* 20. 22.) in a way imper-  
ceptible; and did so insinuate it self, that  
it became, as it were, one Spirit with  
theirs, and they thought as the Spirit  
dispos'd them to think, as well as spake  
as *the Spirit gave them utterance*, *Acts* 2. 4.  
This was thinking and speaking by Inspi-  
ration: And this being the most eminent  
way of God's communicating his Will  
to Mankind, is call'd Revelation in the  
New Testament especially, it being im-  
mediate, without the intervention of  
Visions, or Extasies, or Voices, or any  
other means than it self; and this was  
the way by which the Apostles received  
their Revelation, called a Revealing by  
*the Spirit*.

~~~~~  
Sermon
VII.
Rom. 16.
25, 26.
Gal. 1. 12.
1 Cor. 2.
10.
Ephes. 3.
3, 5, 6.
1 Thes. 4. 8.

2. Another way by which God re-
vealed himself, was Vision, or Sight.
This was so common, that all the ways
of Revelation are sometimes set forth by
this term.

A Vision is the Representation of an
Object, as in a Glass which places the
Visage before us; and by which we have
as clear a view of the things thus repre-
sented, as if they were the things them-
selves, and not the Images or appearances
of them.

And therefore though the external
Senses are herein bound up, and, as it
were,

218 *The several Ways of Revelation.*

 were, laid asleep in a Trance; yet the things presented at that time to the imagination, and intended as a Revelation of something to happen or to be done, are as plain, and evident, as sensible Objects that lie open to the Sense. Thus *Balaam* describes it as to himself, *who saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open*, Numb. 24. 16. that is, though he had not the exercise of his outward Senses; and so his Eyes were of no more use to him when open than if they were shut, yet he evidently saw whatever was presented to his mind. Thus *St. Paul* as clearly saw our Saviour by a Representation or Vision, when he was in a Trance in the Temple, as he did when he actually and visibly appear'd to him at Mid-day on the way to *Damascus*.

Acts 22.
 17, 18.
 Acts 9. 4.
 c. 26. 13.
 1 Cor. 15.
 8.

In this case things imaginary are as if they were real, remote as if they were near, future as if present, and secret as if open; that is, what sight, presence, and knowledge is to us in things sensible when we are awake, and have a full exercise of our outward Senses; that is Vision to the Visionaries, to such as are in an Extasy.

This will be farther illustrated by a reflection upon these several particulars;

The several Ways of Revelation. 219

to which (if I mistake not) all the instances of this kind may be reduced.

Sermon
VII.

As

I. In Vision things imaginary and internal are represented as evidently as if they were real and external. Thus much is intimated in the case of *St. Peter*; of whom 'tis said, when the Angel smote him, and the chains fell off from his hands, *he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision.* From whence it follows, that all this (which he found to be real when he came to himself) might have been represented by way of Vision; and things thereby represented are as evidently proposed to the Mind, as outward Objects can be to the Eye. Thus it was with the same Apostle when he fell into a Trance, and *saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth; wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, &c.* Acts 10. 10, &c. Of this kind of Vision, were *Jeremiab's* wearing a linen Girdle, and his hiding it afterwards in a hole by *Euphrates*; and his taking a cup of fury at the Lord's hand, and causing all Nations to drink of it. Of the same kind were *Ezekiel's* eating

Acts 12. 9.

Jerem. 13.

1. &c. 25.

15.

Ezek. ch.

3, 4, 5.

of &c.

of the Roll, his typical laying Siege to
 Sermon *Jerusalem*, and an hundred things more
 VII. in that and other Prophetical Books.

In which cases, when the things represented are wholly imaginary, and never existent, what is in Phrase positively said of them, is to be supplied with *as it were*; as in the aforesaid Vision of St. Peter, when it is said *Peter saw heaven opened, and a sheet descending*, &c. it being not a thing really done, but only by Representation, it is to be understood, That he, *as it were*, saw Heaven opened.

2. In Vision things remote are represented as near and present, and the Visionary has all the advantage of sight in things presented to the Eye without the use of sight, or change of place. So *Ezek. 1. 1. & 8. 3. &c.* *Ezekiel*, when a Captive in *Chaldea*, had the state of *Jerusalem* (as it was then in fact) set before him; whither he was brought *in the visions of God*, and as evidently saw all things that were at that time transacted in the Temple, as if he had been actually there: And even the secret practices of the Elders and Priests in the most retired corners were at that distance exactly represented to him; so that if he had been personally with them, they had not been more visible to him.

There

There he beheld the Idols pourtrayed on the wall; and the Seventy Men, or Sermon Sanhedrim, and *Jaazaniab* their Head, VII in the midst of them, with every Man his Censer in his hand, and all the particulars as there described.

3. In Vision, things future are as evidently represented, as if they were present. Thus *Saul* when deprived of his Sight, saw in a Vision *Ananias* coming in, and by Imposition of hands restoring him to it; and by which means, as described to him before-hand, he as perfectly knew *Acts* 9. 12. *Ananias*, when he came to see, as if he had afore time been conversant with him. From whence we may observe:

(1.) That Vision is Supernatural; so in the Old Testament, *Ezekiel* saith, *The Ezek. 8. 1. hand of the Lord was upon me.* And in Revel. 1. the New, *St. John* saith, *He was in the 10. Spirit.*

(2.) That it is Internal; when the Soul, tho' in the Body, yet for the present is as out of it, as to corporeal Sensations, and sees, perceives and understands nothing by the external organs. Thus it was with *St. Paul* in his wonderful Rapture, when his Soul was in such an abstracted and elevated state, that he himself could not tell, whether he was in the ² *Cor. 12. 1, 2.* body or out of the body.

So

So that when the Name of Vision is given in Scripture to this way of Divine

VII. Communication, it is not from any use made of corporeal sight, or that it is entertain'd with any external objects; but because of the clearness and evidence of it, and a conformity it therein bears to outward and corporeal Sense.

By which it is distinguished from external Representations, (which were also very frequent in those times of Revelation) of which there were two sorts more especially, *viz.*

(1.) That which the *Jews* call the *Shechinah*, which was God's manifestation of himself in a visible Glory and Majesty, without any form, as he did to the Patriarchs; and afterwards it was the token of his special residence among his people the *Jews*, called therefore his *dwelling between the cherubins*.

Gen. 17. 1.
&c.

Psal. 80. 1.

Gen. 18.

1, 2.

ch. 19. 1.

Hebr. 13. 2.

(2.) Another way of appearance was by Angels, when they took upon them a humane form, by way of condescension to mankind, and for a freer conversation with them; and from which form and umbrage, the Scripture terms them *Men*: but, besides what the Sequel of Scripture and common Sense shews, the Apostle hath taught us that they were Divine Messengers sent immediately from God, upon

The several Ways of Revelation. 223

upon especial occasions and emergencies. ~~~~~
But the *Shechinah*, called *The Glory of Serimon*
the Lord, was a Manifestation of the Di- VII.
vine Presence, and not a Revelation; and
the Angels were only Messengers of a Re-^{Num. 16.}
velation: And so neither of them belong^{42, &c.}
properly to this place.

3. Another way of Revelation was by
Dreams. There is so far an agreement
between Vision and Dreams, that in both
the external Senses were bound up, so
that a Vision may be called a supernatu-
ral Dream, and a Dream may be said to
be a natural Vision; and so in *Job* they
seem to be taken for one and the same.
God speaketh in a dream, in a vision of the^{Job 33. 14,}
night, when deep sleep falleth upon men,^{15. ch. 4.}
in slumbrings upon the bed. But the^{13.}
Scripture otherwise usually speaks of
them as two distinct ways of Revelation:
So *Num. 12. 6.* *If there be a prophet a-*
mong you, I the Lord will make my self
known to him in a vision, and will speak
unto him in a dream. So *Joel 2. 28.* And
the difference between them seems to be,

(1.) That Vision properly speaking
was generally, if not always, when the
Visionary was awake, whether by night
or day; but Dreams (as the nature
of the thing shews) were, when the
external Senses were asleep; and Reason,

as

as to its present operation, was bound
Sermon up with them.

VII.

(2.) In a Vision the whole was supernatural, without any humane predisposition or concurrence, as the Scripture-phrase doth shew, (as St. *John* was said to be *carried in the spirit into the wilderness*, and a Trance is said to fall upon St. *Peter*;) But to dream, is a natural Motion of the Spirits, and Disposition of Body, which the Spirit of God, or an Angel (the usual Minister employ'd in such conveyances) made use of; both as the Mind was then in a state of Repose, and by the Rest of the Body relaxed from the business of the day; and also as what was suggested in that way, made a stronger impression upon the Mind, when not diverted by outward objects and occasions, and that there was a cessation from all external and sensible operations. For it seemed necessary (naturally speaking) that in all Revelations there should be a sedate disposition of Mind, and an abstraction from all other Conceptions; and therefore it was either found so, as in Dreams, or made so by some Angelical and Divine Operation, as in a Vision or Trance. In both the Senses were therefore bound up; but in a Vision, by a supernatural Agency; in Sleep or Dreams,

Rev. 17. 3.

ch. 21. 20.

Acts 10. 10.

ἐπέπεσεν

ἐπ' αὐτόν

The several Ways of Revelation. 225

Dreams, by the mere effect of Nature.  Sermon

And if it be asked, How then is there a Revelation by Dream, when Revelation is supernatural, and a Dream natural? VII.

I answer; Though it be as natural to dream as to sleep, and a Dream is a Consequent, if not a constant Concomitant of Sleep; yet in this case (which we are speaking of) the Revelation or Dream was supernatural. As to think or speak is natural to Man; but so to think or speak as is above the capacity of the Agent, and what he of himself could never have thought or spoken, shews that he is not so much an Agent as a Recipient, and the Instrument made use of in the conveyance. Thus it was no more natural for *Balaam* several Ages before, to foretel *what the children of Israel should do to the Moabites in the latter days*, than it was for his Ass to speak. Numb. 24.
14.

So to dream is natural, but to dream of such things then in doing, or of such things to come as are altogether independent on the Body, nor by any methods of Nature or presumptive Art to be known or foreseen, is supernatural. Thus to dream was natural to *Pharaoh*,

as to others; and his Dream of the Seven fat and lean Kine, might have pass'd for the fruit of a nocturnal Imagination; but by a Dream to be made understand, that there should be successively seven Years of great Plenty, and then seven Years of Famine, could proceed only from a Divine Revelation.

Gen. 41.
1, &c.

And this will farther appear in the process of this Discourse, when I am to consider the difference between what is Natural, and what is Divine, &c.

4. Another sort of Revelation was by Voice, and that by way of immediate communication, or occasional. The former of these was vouchsafed to *Abraham*, and above all to *Moses*; to whom God is said to have spoken *face to face, as a Man speaketh unto his friend*.

Exod. 33.
9, 11.

By which He is distinguished from all other Prophets, and preferr'd above them, as it is recorded, *Numb. 12. 6, 7, 8. If there be a Prophet among you, I the Lord will make my self known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, &c. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently; and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the Lord shall be beheld.*

That

The several Ways of Revelation. 227

That Revelation to him was after the way of communication, open and clear, Sermon VII.
as a Friend converses with a Friend; and whenever he had occasion to know the mind of God, he went to the place where he might be sure to meet him, that is, into the Tabernacle, and there he *heard the voice of one speaking unto him from between the two cherubims*, Numb. 7. 89.

Next to this, was the continuance of that Oracle among the *Jews*, to which the High-Priest repair'd in any difficulties; but how far the Divinity did communicate it self in that way, the Scripture is not positive. We find that it was with-held in the time of *Saul*; for when he enquired of the Lord, 'tis said, *The Lord answer'd him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets, nor by any other way.* 1 Sam. 28. 6.

There was another sort of Voice, which was altogether occasional, and proceeded from the *magnificent Glory*, in 2 Pet. 1. 17. *St. Peter's* Phrase; and was for some particular direction, as to *Hagar*, to *Abraham*, &c. or for testimony and confirmation, as was that the Apostle speaks of, when it was audibly proclaim'd from Heaven, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*

Q 2

Thus


~~~~~  
 Sermon  
 VII.

Thus far I have treated of the several ways of Revelation recorded in the Holy Scripture, and in which God spake *in time past by the Prophets*. There was one more which the *Jews* of latter Ages speak of, and would have continued, after the other were discontinued, called by them the *Bath Col*, or the *Low Voice*; and which after a sort they conceive was to supply the deficiency of the other; but that is beside my present purpose, having confined my self to Scripture alone.

Where also we find nothing observ'd or allow'd of another way, which the *Heathenish World* abounded in, and by which they thought the success and event of any design they had in hand might be learned, and that was *Divination*. When by the Air or Earth, the flight or feeding of Birds, the Entrails of Beasts, &c. they might judge of the way they were to take, or the event of their proceedings, as did the King of *Babylon*. A Pretence foolish enough, and which we can make no better a use of, than to observe how desirous the World has always been of a Revelation, how sensible of the need of a farther direction, than what mere Nature or Reason did dictate; and withal, how foolish Mankind was under the want of it. For how can it be suppos'd that Futurities should

Ezek. 21.  
 21, 22.

*The several Ways of Revelation.* 229

should be dependent upon such sorry Accidents, or that the Divinity should thus reveal it self? Therefore it is no wonder to find the true Revelation so silent as to these ludicrous matters; and if we had there found such an Order of Men established by that, as were the *Augurs*, *Haruspices*, and *Extispices* among the Heathens, and such Rules as those had for to guide them in their observations according to that senseless Art; it would be a better Argument against the Authority of such a Revelation, than ever yet has been or can be advanced against it by its greatest Enemies. No! these are justly reckon'd among the Abominations of the Heathen, and forbidden to the Jews, viz. *There shall not be found among you any one, &c.* Sermon VII.

*Deut. 18. 10, &c.*  
*that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an incanter, or a charmer, or a consulter with a familiar spirit; for all that do these things, are an abomination unto the Lord.*

But now granting that the Deity did make known and communicate his Will in the ways before spoken of, of Inspiration, Vision, Dreams and Voices; yet there remains a great difficulty behind, and that is, How we may be satisfied about the truth and certainty of such a Revelation? And that because as there

are Supernatural Visions, Voices and  
 Sermon Dreams, so there are Natural; as Di-  
 VII. vine, so Humane; as Real, so Imagina-  
 ry on one hand, and Pretence on the  
 other: And therefore how shall we distin-  
 guish the Supernatural, from the Natu-  
 ral; the Divine, from the Humane; the  
 Real, from the Imaginary and Pretended?  
 And how know we, but that what we call  
 a Divine Inspiration, Vision, Dream and  
 Voice, may be Natural and Humane, may  
 be Imaginary, Enthusiastical and Suppo-  
 sititious? The persons may say as those,  
*Jer. 23. 25. I have dreamed, I have*  
*dreamed; and yet it be a Vision of their*  
*own heart.* Or that there may be a lying  
*spirit in the mouth of the Prophets,* as *Mi-*  
*caiah* said of those in his time, *1 Kings*  
*22. 22.*

This brings to the second:

2. To consider the difference between  
 Divine Communications, Natural Impres-  
 sions, and Diabolical Illusions; whether  
 by Inspiration or Vision, Dreams or Voices.

In the resolution of which Case, it is  
 not my design to discourse nicely, after  
 a philosophical manner; as about the  
 force of Imagination, and the influence  
 invisible Agents have upon Mankind; for  
 that is to go a great way about, without  
 coming



*The several Ways of Revelation.* 231

coming nearer the Point than when we first set out; and is not to be done, *Sermon VII.* without knowing what we pretend not to know.

I don't question but that if we had an immediate Intuition into the state of the Mind, or the operations upon it, we might discern as plain a difference between Temper and Inspiration, Imposture and Revelation, as between day and night; or as there is between an Angel of light, and an Angel of darkness, to such as are in the invisible state.

But these things are alike unknown to us; only this we may say, That Divine Inspiration is discover'd as Light, by it self; and which the Person divinely moved and illuminated is as much assured of, as he is of the existence of any thing in being, or the truth of any Proposition, as has been before said. And when *Serm. III.* the Divine Power operates, it hath so much the Ascendant over the natural Temper, that it lays a Person under an *Jer. 20. 9. Ezek. 3. 14.* uncontrollable necessity of obeying the Dictates of it, as it was with the Prophets of old.

But if it be said, Don't we see Enthusiastical Persons as confident of their Imaginary Inspirations and Visions, and look upon themselves as much obliged to

Q 4

follow

~~~~~ follow them, as those that are truly In-  
 Sermon spired do to obey what is Divine?

VII,

I answer, Be it so; yet this is of it self no Argument against the truth and certainty of Revelation, and of Revelation in those ways. Is it any Argument against the certainty of Sense, that it is often deceived and imposed upon? Or against Truth, that there are Errors and everlasting Disputes among Mankind? And because there are, are we all obliged to be Scepticks; and may we be positive that there is no Truth nor Certainty in the World; and that no Man can be sure he sees, or hears, or knows, or lives? And because there are, or have been deluded and brain-sick Persons, are therefore none wise, or in their Wits?

And are all Inspired Persons no more to be credited than if they were Lunatics? Or don't they know themselves to be any more Inspired, than those that are agitated by the power of a wild Imagination? Confidence in imaginary Inspirations may be great; but the Perception, and so the Assurance cannot be alike to what is real. But tho' the Deity can so communicate it self, as that the Person inspired shall know most certainly, it is from God, and from him alone; and so there is no absolute ne-

cessity

The several Ways of Revelation. 233

cessity of any farther evidence to him, no more than there is of Light to give evidence to Light: Yet that there might nothing be wanting for the farther satisfaction of such as had a Revelation, there was often added some sign, or supernatural proof. So when *Gideon* had some doubt of what the Angel said, (when he knew not what he was) and was timorous, when requir'd to go on a difficult Enterprize; he was confirmed, by the Fire out of the Rock that consumed the Flesh; and by the Fleece; and the Soldier's Dream, and the Interpretation of it. Sermon VII.

And *Moses* was convinced not only of his own Mission from God, but of the acceptance and authority he should upon it have with the People, when the Rod in his Hand was turned into a Serpent; and his Hand, by putting it into his Bosom, was made leproous, and cured again in a moment, by taking it out. Judges 6. 21, 37. 7. 13, 14. Exod. 4. 3, 6.

A course altogether necessary, for the satisfaction of others, (as has been before observed) and which may reasonably be demanded. For if a Person shall come, under the pretence of a Revelation, with a Message to others, and require them, as they tender their Salvation, to receive it, and to submit to it, without

Serm. III.

without such Certificates as shall give
 Sermon Authority to it; it is like one that shall
 VII. take on him the Style and Character of
 an Ambassador, without any Credentials
 to give him Authority, and deserves no
 better acceptance. Let then a *Moses*
 come with a Message to *Pharaoh* in the
 Name of God, and require him to obey
 it; that Prince might reasonably expect
 a farther confirmation than his Word,
 and it must be somewhat truly great
 Exod. 2. and greater than what was done by his
 18. Magicians, that should determine him to
 a belief of it.

Let *Elijah* confront *Ahab*, and the
 Priests of *Baal*, and they dispute his
 Mission and Authority; he appeals to the
 1 Kings 18. Supreme Authority to decide it, *The*
 24, 36. *God that answereth by fire, let him be*
God.

Let a *lying Spirit* be put in the Mouth
 of the other Prophets in opposition unto
Micaiah, that Prophet, for the Convi-
 ction of all, leaves it to the event, say-
 1 Kings 22. ing unto *Ahab*, *If thou return at all in*
 28. *peace, the Lord hath not spoken by me.*
And he said, Hearken, O People, every
one of you.

By this means, that is, by Predictions
 and Miracles, a Prophet may be known
 to be a Prophet, and an Inspiration to
 be

be an Inspiration; and by these Characters may we be able to judge of both; Sermon VII
as to the Authority of the Mission, and the Truth of the Inspiration. Where the Evidence was necessary, there was never wanting one or both of these. And though *John* did no Miracle, yet he had the Spirit of Prophecy, the People acknowledged, for said they, *All things John spake of this Man [Jesus]* ^{John 10. 41.}
were true. There may, 'tis likely, be Inspiration where there is neither of these, nor the like Evidences; but there is no obligation on others to believe it, without the Evidence be sufficient; (for such as the Evidence is, such is the Obligation) but the Evidence is not sufficient which rests solely on Humane Authority, and has nothing but the bare word and affirmation of the Pretender to prove it. To this purpose, saith our Saviour, *If I bear witness of my self,* ^{John 5. 31,}
my witness is not true ——— *The works* ^{36.}
that I do, bear witness of me. So that Inspiration is, as to others, no Inspiration, till it be proved: It may, for ought appears to the contrary, be no other than Delusion, or Imposture. Let therefore the Imagination be never so strong, the Confidence never so great, the Intent never so good; the Question is, Whence
is

is this, what Evidence doth the Person
 Sermon bring of his Mission from God? Upon
 VII. what doth it rest? Into what is it re-
 solved? What doth he produce more than
 what may be the fruit of Imagination?
 It may all be a fit of Enthusiasm. So that
 if a Person will pretend to immediate In-
 spiration, (were it an Age for it) and
 much more, pretend to it after Inspirati-
 on has ceased; he must be able to fortify
 it by such Evidence as can come from none
 but him from whom the Inspiration came,
 if it be Divine.

So much for Inspiration, in opposition
 to Natural Impressions and Diabolical Il-
 lusions; and which may serve as a ge-
 neral Answer to the other particular In-
 stances that remain.

Thus it was in Visions; which as to the
 Visionaries was with that Evidence, as
 could leave no manner of doubt of what
 was therein represented. So *Micaiah* de-
 scribes his Vision, *I saw the Lord sitting*
 1 Kings 22. *on his throne, and all the host of Heaven*
 19. *standing by him, on his right hand, and*
on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall
persuade Ahab, that he may go up and
fall at Ramoth-Gilead? &c. And by this
 as he himself did abide, so the Event ve-
 rified it, *vers. 34.*

The several Ways of Revelation. 237

The same is to be said as to Dreams, which had such a peculiar stroke upon the Imagination, that the Divine had a different effect upon the Person from what was *Natural*; and therefore *Abimelech*, before he had expostulated the Case with *Abraham*, communicated his Dream to his Family, from the confidence he had in himself of the truth of it. Sermon VII.
Gen. 20. 3.

And especially has this a sufficient Evidence as to others.

1. When such things are therein discover'd, which they had before no knowledge of; as was the Case of *Abimelech*.

Or 2. Which were so remote in Place, or Time, as none could possibly reveal, but by a Divine Communication.

Or 3. When the Interpretation was quite different from the Dream, nor was without that Interpretation to be understood. This was the Case of *Pharaoh*, about the *seven fat and lean kine*, &c. *Gen. 41*. Of *Nebuchadnezzar*, about his own Transformation and Deposition, *Dan. 4. 19.* and that of the *Midianitish Soldier*, *Judg. 7. 13, 14.*

Where if we grant that the Dreams, as to the matter, might have been the effect of a rolling Imagination, (as *Pharaoh's Kine*, *Nebuchadnezzar's Tree*, and the

238 *The several Ways of Revelation.*

the Soldier's Cake) yet how the seven
 Sermon Kine should prove a Prediction of seven
 VII. Years Plenty and Famine; or the felling
 of the Tree be an Emblem of *Nebuchad-
 nezzar's* dethronization; or that a Cake
 of Bread tumbling into the Host, and
 overturning a Tent, should presignify
 the Sword, and Success of *Gideon*, and
 that *into his hand God would deliver the
 host of Midian*; was utterly unaccounta-
 ble, if it were not (as *Joseph* said to *Pha-
 raoh*,) that *God himself thereby shewed
 what he was about to do*, and that it came
 from him who is a *Revealer of Secrets*,
 as *Nebuchadnezzar* acknowledged.

Lastly, The like may be said of a Re-
 velation by Voice, which, if internal, is
 the same with a Dream or Vision, as go-
 ing along with it; and so has the same
 sort of evidence. If external, it is its
 own evidence; as was that from Heaven,
 Mat. 3. 17. to give testimony to our Saviour. Or it
 was by way of Oracle; and then the Au-
 thority of the Voices was justified by the
 numerous Predictions; the design they
 apparently promoted of encouraging the
 good, of admonishing and reforming the
 bad; and in all, of promoting Vertue
 and true Religion in the world; and to
 whose veracity future Ages have given
 Testimony, by suitable Events. Where-

as those of the Heathens were very suspicious and doubtful, and often detected to be only Forgery and a Confederacy; and disowned at that time (when in vulgar estimation) by the wisest among themselves; and the reputation of which at last as well utterly fell, as the pretence to them did. Serm. VII. Vid. Ser. II.

So that were the Case to be put upon this issue, and to be decided by the measures before laid down, we may safely venture the whole Cause of Revelation upon it; when there is nothing wanting, that can reasonably be desired, toward the justification of its veracity; and that there is no manner of pretence for applying the same terms of evidence and sincerity to Imagination, as to Inspiration; or to Imposture, (whether Enthusiastical or Diabolical) as is to Revelation.

For when was it known, that Imagination or Nature did ever empower persons to speak all Languages, and to discourse readily at once with the *Parthians*, *Medes*, and *Elamites*, &c. in their several Tongues? When did Imagination or Nature enable persons, without any skill, to cure Diseases, naturally incurable; and such as had no humane Learning, to talk like Philosophers of the sublimest Arguments, and with as much freedom

as

as they used the Speech of the Foreign
 Sermon Nations they instructed?

VII. Farther, What Imagination, or Nature, or Art could inspirit *Moses* with such a supernatural Power, as to turn his Rod into a Serpent, and to devour those of the Magicians; and by a stroke of it to fetch water out of the Rock, and stop the mighty Current of the Sea?

What Imagination could form such Idea's in the minds of a *Pharaoh* and *Nebuchadnezzar*, or inspire a *Joseph* and a *Daniel* to give such an Interpretation of them, as justified it self to be true by a correspondent Event?

When did Imagination give life to a Fly, or do the least Act out of it self? When did that, or Nature, or Imposition, raise the dead, with *Elisha*, call for Fire from Heaven with *Elijah*, or foretel what shall happen a hundred or a thousand years after, or so much as what a Person shall think to morrow? Here we may challenge all the Magicians of a *Pharaoh* and a *Nebuchadnezzar*, all the Men of Art and Science, all the Enthusiasts and Impostors in the World, to talk as the Persons Inspired did talk, to do as they did, and to produce those Testimonies as those upon occasion produced in their own justification, and for
 the

The several Ways of Revelation. 241

the confirmation of their Mission from God.

Sermon
VII.

From all which we see what evidence we have for the Truth of our Revelation, by the various ways of its manifestation. If we had such Inspirations, such Visions of things future and remote, &c. what evidence could we desire more to attest and bear witness to what we are to believe and receive? And what Absurdities must we be cast upon, if we would venture to call those matters of Fact in question, which though peculiar to those times, lose not their evidence and force because they are not in ours, nor have been for several Ages, nor are, 'tis likely, to be in the Christian Church?

However, there are those manifestations of the Divine Presence and Power, which we are all capable of, and may obtain by Prayer to God; and which shall be more beneficial to us, than if we our selves could work Miracles, and were the Inspired Persons to whom God did thus make known himself, as he did *in time past to the Prophets*; and those are the Grace and Assistance of his Holy Spirit, and the doing his Will in virtue of it: Qualifications that will render us more acceptable to him, and make us more capable of his favour, and all the advantages of it in

R

this

242 *The several Ways of Revelation.*

~~~~~  
Sermon    this World, and that to come, than if we  
VII.    could divide the Sea with *Moses*, or stop  
the Sun in its course with *Joshua*, or  
raise the dead with *Elisha*. For then,  
though without those miraculous Dona-  
tions, we may be received with a *Come*  
*ye blessed of my Father, inherit the king-*  
*dom prepared for you from the foundation*  
*of the world.*

Which God of his Infinite Mercy  
grant to us all, through *Jesus Christ*  
our Lord.    *Amen.*

---

S E R.



# SERMON VIII.

---

HEB. I. 1, 2.

*God who at sundry times, and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, &c.*

**I**N which words (as I have shewed) there is.

1. A Description of Revelation, 'tis God's *speaking*.

2. The Certainty of such a Revelation, God *spake*, 'tis taken for granted.

3. The Order observed in it, it was at *sundry times*.

4. The Perfection and Completion of all; God *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*.

~~~~~  
 Sermon
 VIII.

Under the Third,

(1.) I have considered the several ways by which God did reveal himself, as Inspiration, &c.

(2.) Have shewed the difference between Divine Inspirations, and Diabolical Illusions, and Natural Impressions.

(3.) I am now to consider the several periods before the Law, under the Law, and under the Gospel, and the gradual progress of Revelation from first to last, from the lower to the higher degree, and the perpetual respect one had to the other.

(4.) I am farther to consider, why God did thus gradually and *at sundry times* proceed in revealing his Will to Mankind; and why he did not at the first communicate his Will to them as fully and perfectly, as he did in *the last days by his Son*.

And then I am to conclude with the last General, *viz.*

4. Where I am to shew the Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation till the end of the World.

I have here a large Field before me; and many difficult Points to treat of; but because this is the Concluding-Lecture of the Year, I shall sum it up, and
 pass

pass through the Particulars with as much brevity as the time will allow; Sermon and with as much attention as I can; VIII. though I must fall short of what the Subject and Nature of the things to be spoken of doth deserve, and might otherwise, be treated of.

(3.) I am now come to the Third Branch, and to consider the several Periods, *viz.* the Patriarchal before the Law, the *Mosaical* under the Law, and the Evangelical under the Gospel.

The Patriarchal State, is that which extended from *Adam* to the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, and the giving the Law at Mount *Sinai*, which included in it the space of Two thousand five hundred Years, and upward.

The *Mosaical* or Legal State, was that which extended from the delivery of the Law at *Sinai*, to the preaching of *John the Baptist*, with whom ended the *time past*, and the *last days* began; which included in it the space of One thousand four hundred Years, and upward.

The Evangelical State, is that which began with *John the Baptist*, and is to continue to the World's end.

In the consideration of these three States, we may observe, That there is a great difference between them, and a


~~~~~  
 Sermon greater ; so that the *Mosaical* is superior  
 VIII. to the Patriarchal, and the Evangelical  
 to the *Mosaical*.

When I speak of the Patriarchal, I intend to give it all the advantage, by looking upon it as a State of Revelation, and not a bare State of Nature ; for I have before proved, that there was a Revelation from the beginning, and derived down by a constant Pedigree and Succession, more or less. But what it was, we must in great part rather conjecture, than can certainly know ; especially as to the *Antediluvian* State. For the Flood having swept away the whole Stock of the ungodly *Cainites*, it was the design of Providence that their *Memorial* should perish with them : And so the Divine Penman contracted that State, and gives us only a Breviat of what passed before the Flood.

We have there the History of the Creation, Fall, and Recovery of Man ; and may observe how seasonably Almighty God interposed for his Comfort and Relief, by the promise of *the Seed of the Woman*. We may observe farther, how for the maintaining of his Authority, and the manifestation of his Justice and Holiness, and to imprint on the minds of  
 Men

Men a dread of offending for the future, and to keep up an expectation of the Son of God's appearing and becoming a Sacrifice in our Nature, God established from the very first a course of Sacrifices; by the means of which Atonement Sinners might have a right Notion of Almighty God: when his Justice and Mercy were thus intermingled; that they might not be encouraged to presume on one hand, nor be thrown into despair on the other.

Sermon  
VIII.

We may observe farther, how God provided for the preservation of Religion, and especially of Revelation, by the Longævity of the Patriarchs, and a Race of Holy Men, who were Prophets and Testifiers of his Will; of whom there was a constant Succession; that by a long Conversation between Father and Son, Progenitors and Successors, what was wanting in Records and Memorials, might be supplied.

We may observe farther, how ineffectual this course proved in the Issue, how degenerate Mankind grew, so inflexible and incorrigible, that to purge out this pest of Impiety that had infected the whole Race, God took up a resolution of discharging the World of that impious Stock, and to raise up a new Seed from

the Righteous *Noah*; and that issued in  
 Sermon the Flood.

## VIII.

This is the short History of the first Sixteen hundred fifty six years of the World, the Antediluvian State.

The Revelation, so far as it is handed down to us in *Moses's* Writings, was then obscure; But a Revelation they had, and Prophets, and those of the higher Form: Insomuch, that some of the *Jews* hold, that *Enoch*, in particular, was endued with a higher degree of Prophecy than *Moses* and *Elias*.

But whatever it was, the sum amounted to this, That God was reconciled to Man after his Apostacy; that he had established an Atonement; and that in process of time the Son of God should in our Nature actually appear, and become a Saviour to us, and be a Propitiation for our Sins.

But there is a farther branch of this Patriarchal State, which is the Post-Diluvian, after the Deluge.

Here we are in part in the dark as before; for there were no less than Three hundred sixty seven years, at the least, past (for so long it was from the Flood to *Abraham's* departure out of *Haran*) of which the Inspired Historian gives little account. All that we have, is the progeny of the Sons of *Noah*, and their dispersion,



person, and the division of Tongues upon the foolish and presumptuous attempt at *Babel*. Sermon VIII.

The reason of this seems to be much the same as before the Flood; and that was the general depravation of Mankind, of which the said attempt at *Babel* was an Instance; and the Call of *Abraham* out of the Land of the *Chaldees* an Evidence.

For the reason of that Call of his, was the Idolatry then growing upon the World; the infection of which, it seems, the Family of *Sem* had not altogether escaped: For this the Ancestors of *Abraham* are charged with, *Josb.* 24. 2, 14. And then it was in him that pure Religion began to lift up its head again; and for that reason that he might become an eminent Instrument for preserving and promoting it, God revealed himself to that Holy Patriarch.

And this is the Third Branch of the Patriarchal Period, which I may call the *Abraamical* State.

The first Revelation of this was (as aforesaid) to *Adam*, which was, that it should be *the Seed of the Woman* (whom the Serpent had seduced, and thought to have brought his ends about by). The next opening of this great secret of Divine Wisdom was, that this Seed, or *Messias*, should descend from the Stock of *Abraham*,

 *ham, viz. In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed, Gen. 12. 3. which the*  
 Sermon VIII. *Apostle applies to Christ, Gal. 3. 16. and to which Abraham had a respect in the Birth of Isaac, when he gave him that Name, which signifies laughter, or rejoycing, Gen. 21. 3. 6. Thus our Saviour interprets it in that allusion, Your father Abraham rejoyced to see my day, and was glad, John 8. 56.*

Gen. 18. 18.  
 22. 18.  
 Gen. 26. 4.  
 28. 14.

This was the reason why *Moses* did so carefully draw down the Pedigree of *Sem*, which terminated in *Abraham*; passing slightly by the History of his Progenitors, and taking up that of this Patriarch, in whom the Holy Seed did more illustriously appear: And why also he so punctually set down the time when this promise to *Abraham* was first made, and which as the principal of all, God did several times repeat to him, and also to *Isaac* and *Jacob*, at the first time he is said to have appeared to them.

So that though they had a standing Oracle, and had other Revelations, yet this of the holy Seed was the chief Revelation, and which was upon all solemn occasions renewed.

But though Revelation did eminently conduce to the good of the World, where it was promulged and received, and afford-

ed a much brighter and more certain light than Nature and Reason of it self did; yet even here Revelation made, as it were, a pause, and the Patriarchal State gave way to another which we call, Sermon VIII.

2. The *Mosaical*, which had a manifold advantage of the other.

As

(1.) That Religion here was National, and the People were entire and embodied into one Society; whereas it was otherwise among the Patriarchs, as in the case of *Terah* in *Mesopotamia*; *Melchisedec*, and even *Abraham*, in *Canaan*; and *Job* in *Arabia*; where Religion and the Church was rather Domestical than National.

(2.) The State of the *Jews* was a Theocracy, and the whole of it, whether as to matters Civil or Divine, was established by God's peculiar appointment, and under whose immediate Regiment they were; having his Minister *Moses* their Mediator, *Gal. 3. 19.* and God making them his peculiar and propriety, *Deut. 4. 33, 34. 14. 2.*

(3.) It was a typical State, under which one of greater excellency, and thereafter in process of time to succeed, was adumbrated, I mean, the Evangelical: So that their Rites, and particularly their Sacrifices



~~~~~  
 Sermon fices under that Dispensation, had a peculiar respect to the great Sacrifice, the
 VIII. *Lamb* said to be *slain* (in God's Decree, Revel. 13.8. and in the virtue of it) *from the foundation of the world*: And which those Rites and Sacrifices were intended for the farther ratification, and for the preservation of in their minds.

(4.) I may add, there was an improvement made upon this Legal and Typical State, by the Prophetical; which was enobled by the many illustrious Prophecies, more especially concerning the Messiah, as to the time of his Appearance, his Birth, and the Place of it, his Family, Sufferings, Miracles, Resurrection, Ascension, in abundance of circumstances relating thereunto. And when in the declension of the *Jewish* State, Prophecy might be expected should decay with it, it on the contrary increas'd, till on the sudden it wholly ceas'd, when the Revelation of that kind, and for that season, was sufficient: For what could have been more punctual than what was already Revealed?

(5.) After this there was a long interval of above four hundred Years, and a cessation of that Prophecy and extraordinary Revelation which had continued in that Church for the space of above
 a Thou-

a Thousand years, from the time of *Moses* to that of *Zechary* and *Malachi*; at the close of which it had been foretold, that by the coming of the Messiah, Prophecy and Revelation should revive, and a more plentiful effusion of the Holy Spirit should then be, than had been ever before. Now what should be the reason of this, but that there might be raised in that People the more earnest desire after the approaching of that happy Age; and that they might thereby be convinced that their own Institution was not to continue for ever, and that there was a more perfect Dispensation which they were to expect, and which was to rise, as it were, out of the ashes of the other.

And that is

3. The Evangelical State, which is the close and completion of all; in which the Rites of the Law were compleated, the Types answered by the Anti-Types, and the Prophecies were fulfilled and interpreted by the Event. So that the New Testament is the evidence and proof of the Old; the one declaring what is to come, and the other shewing that it is come; both bearing an exact correspondence to each other.

I proceed to the Fourth Branch of the Third General; where

Sermon 4. I am to consider why God did thus gradually, and *at sundry times*, proceed
VIII. in Revealing his Will to Mankind, and why he did not at the first communicate his Will to them as fully and perfectly, as he did *in the last days by his Son*?

So that there are Two Questions to be resolved.

Q. 1. Why God did not communicate his whole Will *at first*?

Q. 2. Why *in these last days*?

A. (1.) As to the former; it may as well be asked, Why God did ever promise? And why he did not actually give at the same time when he promised?

It may again be as well asked, Why there was such a thing as Prophecy, and that the things Prophesied of were not at the same instant accomplished, as they were predicted?

And if that be the question; it may again as well be asked, Why there is such a thing as Succession? Why there are Causes and Effects? And why all things are not Existent at once? And why all Acts are not done together? For Promises and Prophecies imply Succession; and to require there should be no Promises and no Prophecies, is, in effect, to require there should be no Succession.

(2.) A Promise on God's part, implies
 the

the certainty of the thing in its season, as well as a Prophecy. A Prophecy is certain because of God's infinite Power, Wisdom, and Knowledge, to foresee what will be the effect of such Causes, what the events of such Actions, or how he will order and accomplish them: And a Promise implies besides that, his Faithfulness, and that he will infallibly see to the accomplishment of it. And so whatever is Promised or Prophesied of by Almighty God, is as certain in its Causes, and shall be in the Event, as if it was now in being or now done, or that we had it in actual possession.

(3.) It is as much, if not more, for the Honour of Almighty God, that there should be a Succession of Beings, Actions, and Events, as if they were all Existent at once; and consequently as much to order such Beings, Actions, and Events in Succession, as it is if they were present.

(4.) As there are in Nature a First and a Second, and so on in progression; and all things appearing in their proper time, order, and course, till by degrees 'tis raised to its highest Perfection: So it is as accountable for God to make known his Will to Mankind, to begin and carry it on, from a lesser to a higher degree, as he sees fit; and upon a strict examination has as much Beauty and Order in it. And
to

~ to have all Revelation at once, would
 Sermon appear as irregular as for all Mankind to
 VIII. have lived and died all at once.

(5.) Especially is this, where such Revelations are suited to the state of the World, and that the Dispensation of one Age would not suit the Temper and Circumstances of another; of which we have an instance in the *Jews*, who were of that Temper, that a burdensome and Ritual Religion was more fit for them than another more Refined and Spiritual, and whose External and Gorgeous Form was accommodated accordingly to it, *as under age*, Gal. 4. 1. Therefore it is wisely observed by *Theodoret*, *σύμμετα ταῖς ἡλικίαις προσηύετο παιδαγωγία ὁ Θεός*. That *God suited his Instructions to every Age of the World*: And we have good reason to believe this to be so, because there was such a gradual progress in Divine Revelation, as has been already shewn.

Heret. Fab.
 l. 5. c. 11.

(6.) This is still the more accountable, if we consider that the Obligation of Mankind arises from the Notification of the Divine Will; and that according as the Revelation of it is, so is the Obligation. And therefore those that have no Revelation, are not upon the same strict terms with those that have; nor are those that live under the lower Dispensation, upon the

the same terms with those that have the higher: So the Apostle St. Peter, (*Of a Sermon truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but every one that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.*) VIII. Acts 10. 34.

But this in part belongs to the next Question.

Q. 2. From hence we may be able in part to resolve the other branch of the Question, *viz.* Why God did not at the first send his Son to deliver his Will to the World, as he did *in the last days?*

Celsus, a great Adversary to the Christian Religion, from the consideration of Christ's coming so late into the World for the Redemption of Mankind, compares God to *Jupiter* in the Comedy, *ὡς ἐν τῇ μᾶντι ὕπνῳ διωπνίσας*, *as waking out of a long sleep.*

Origen. contr. Cels. l. 6.

But this may as well be objected against any special act of Divine Providence; and were there no other answer to be given, this were sufficient. But as there were many Prophecies concerning this state of things to be accomplished by the coming of the Messiah, so we shall find sufficient reason for the Justification of Divine Providence in laying the accomplishment of this Scene so remote from the first Ages of the World.

S

For


~~~~~  
 Sermon  
 VIII.

For

1. By this means we see what a wonderful Concatenation there is in the Divine Operations, and how in an orderly course all Events succeed according to his determinate Will, and what he has foretold. For there is a History, as it were, of our Saviour before his Appearance; and by the Description and Characters given of him in Scripture for Four thousand Years together, we may be able to prove, that he is the Messiah.

2. It doth not seem that the World was prepared for it before. For if Christ had been Born and Died as soon as *Adam* had Sinned, there would not have been among Mankind the sense of their Condition, and of the need they stood in of a Redeemer, and of the Goodness of God in providing one for them; nor of the Necessity of the Divine Power to rescue them, if they had not had a long experience of the ineffectualness of any other course or means for it.

3. We are to consider, that the benefit of Christ's Death, looked backward as well as forward, and took place from the first publication of the Promise.

For

(1.) Immediately after the Fall, God did promise, That *the seed of the woman* should

should bruise the Serpent's head; and this being a Promise made to *Adam*, he himself must consequently have the benefit of it: For what advantage or comfort could it have been to him, that Four thousand Years after there should be a Descendent from him that should become a Saviour to them that were at that time in being, and that should then and afterward believe on him? Sermon VIII.

(2.) We are to consider, that this Promise gave *Adam* as much a title to the benefit of such an atonement, and was to him as stable a ground of comfort, as if it had at the same time been actually executed; or as it could be to any that lived in or after the time that this atonement was actually offered, and the promise in all respects punctually made good.

Hence we read in *St. Paul*, of the grace that was in *Christ Jesus* before the world began, *πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων*, of ancient Times, *2 Tim. 1. 9.* But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour; and that not in decree only, but in fact; so the same Apostle uses the phrase, *The hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lye, promised, πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων, before the world began;* 'tis a Promise made in time, and which he there distinguishes Tit. 1. 2, 3.


 distinguishes from the manifestation of it.  
 Sermon So the Gospel was preached before to  
 VIII. Abraham, Gal. 3. 8. and who in the  
 Faith of it, *rejoyced and was glad*, John  
 8. 56. This is implied Heb. 9. 25, 26.  
*Then must he often have suffered since*  
*the foundation of the world*; which im-  
 plies that all sin, since the foundation of  
 the World, was forgiven with respect to  
 that Atonement. So that when there  
 was a promise of such a means for our  
 Reconciliation to God, and in the ver-  
 tue of which the Penitent might plead  
 for pardon, it was equally as advanta-  
 geous to them that believed *in him that*  
*was to come*, from the first publicati-  
 on of that Promise, as if they had then  
 had a plenary possession: So that Christ  
 might be well said to be *the lamb slain*  
*from the foundation of the world*, Rev.  
 13. 8.

4. I may say, in all appearance there  
 was not a more proper time for the com-  
 ing of our Saviour into the World, and  
 for all the Events depending upon it, than  
 that in which he appeared.

And that if we consider,

(1.) The general expectation of it  
 in conformity to ancient Prophecies.  
 This was notorious among the *Jews*:  
 So Luke 19. 11. *They thought the King-*  
dom



dom of God should immediately appear; that is, the Kingdom of the Messiah.  Sermon

So we find Simeon and Anna, and others, waited for the consolation of Israel, Luke 2. 25, 38. of which number was Joseph of Arimathea, Mark 15. 43. VIII.

Nay, this or something like it, was got among the Gentiles: So Tacitus, the Roman Historian, *Many were persuaded, that it was contained in the ancient Writings of the Priests, that at that time it should come to pass, That the East should prevail, and that they should proceed from Judæa who should be Lords of all; which was a Prophecy of Vespasian and Titus.* Hist. 1. 5. c. 2. §. 8.

Suetonius another Historian saith, *That it was an old and constant Opinion that had prevailed all over the East: This the Event, saith he, shewed to be meant of the Roman Emperor; but the Jews applying it to themselves, Rebelled.*

This is agreeable to what is said by Josephus, the Jewish Historian, who saith, *That which stirred up the Jews, and brought final Ruine upon them, was the Opinion they had from χρησιμὸς ἀμφιῆς, some doubtful Prophecy in the Sacred Writings, that at that very time there should arise from that Coun-* Joseph. de Bell. 7. κεφ. λα.

~~~~~  
 Sermon " try one of themselves that should Go-
 VIII. vern the whole World.

(2.) It was a proper time, because as the World had all along the experience of the inability of all human means for reforming the Manners and Tempers of Men, so in that Age more especially, when the Wisdom of the World was in its height both among *Jews* and *Gentiles*.

When among the *Jews* they were at that time as averse to Idolatry, as ever their Ancestors had been inclined to it, and were in all the punctilio's of the Law as exact and scrupulous, as they were skilled in the Letter of it; and yet our Saviour found matter enough to condemn and chastise them for, and their practice was a fit Comment on that of the Apostle, *Rom. 8. 3. What the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh.* So St. Hierom Comments upon it, *Now the time was fulfilled, when through evil Custom no Man could keep the Law.*

And if we turn our selves to the Heathens, Learning is acknowledged to have flourished in the time of *Augustus* beyond any Age, and yet that Age, seemed to equal it self in Vice, not only as the Apostle describes it, *Rom. 1. 29.* but as it is confirmed by

by their own Historians: So St. *Augustin* describes it, *I am not the first that report it, but their own Authors; behold, before the coming of Christ, and after the destruction of Carthage, the manners of their Ancestors were neglected, not as before by little and little, but like a torrent by a strange precipitation; so much was the truth corrupted by luxury and avarice.* Sermon VIII. De civ. Dei l. 2. c. 19.

Now when the World was thus corrupted under the best human means, What could be a fitter season for our Saviour's Appearance? And therefore the Fathers, as *Origen* and *Tertullian*, triumph'd over the Philosophers, and despis'd their artificial methods of Vertue, as too weak for so great and noble an undertaking.

3. It was a fit season, as way was made for the propagation of the Gospel by the dispersion of the *Jews*, and the success of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Arms.

(1.) By the dispersion of the *Jews*, &c. For as their Law did serve to introduce the Gospel, to which it had a Relation, and of which it was a proof; so by their dispersion upon the Captivity (whence many of them never returned) and by other subsequent means, many of the prejudices which other Nations had against the *Jewish* Religion and Nation, were taken off,

And this was much furthered by the
 Sermon Translation of the Old Testament into
 VIII. Greek (which was then the General Lan-
 guage). From whence I am apt to think,
 that the Opinion mentioned by the above-
 said Roman Historians, did arise. *It was,*
saith Tacitus, in the ancient Writings of
the Priests: And indeed their ex Judæa
profecti qui rerum potirentur, out of Ju-
dæa should proceed those that should Rule
the World, seems to be but the Latin of
the Greek in Mic. 5. 2. ἐκ (ἡ) ἱερουσολῶν ὁ
ἡγούμενος, Out of thee shall come a Gover-
nour, as it is in Matth. 2. 6. or in the
Septuagint, τὸ ἐκ ἱερουσολῶν, that there
should be a Ruler.

*Antiquis
 Sacerdotum
 literis.*

*Ut inva-
 lesceret
 Oriens.*

*Isa. 4. 2.
 Zech. 6. 12.
 ch. 3. 8.
 Luke 1. 78.
 Jer. 23. 5.*

*Jer. 33. 15,
 16.*

And Tacitus's way of expressing it,
 that the East should prevail, is a manifest
 allusion to the same Translation, which
 renders the word, *Tsemach, the Branch*
 (the Name ascribed to our Saviour in the
 Prophets) by *Ἀνατολή, the East*; so Jer.
 23. 5, *Behold the days come, saith the*
Lord, that I will raise unto David a righte-
ous branch, or the East; and a King, that
King, shall reign and prosper, and shall ex-
ecute judgment and justice in the earth.
 Now this Version having been in whole
 or in part, undertaken for the use, and
 at the request of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*
King of Egypt, about Three hundred
 years

years before our Saviour, was in many hands; and so such a material part as those Prophecies could not be overlook'd. Sermon VIII.

And indeed with these Prophecies there may be good account given of those fore-cited places in the *Roman* Historians, but otherwise they are unintelligible, as appears by their application of them to *Vespasian* and his Son *Titus*, for want of understanding the true intent of them, and the respect they had to the Messiah.

(2.) Another means was the success of the *Grecian* and *Roman* Arms; the former of which by *Alexander*, and the latter by *Pompey*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Augustus*, had opened a way into most of the remote parts of the then known world; and by which means, and the civilizing the most barbarous People, there was a freer commerce and access.

It must be confessed, That the Power of God can conquer all difficulties; and which we have an exemplification of in the Gospel, where the *Barbarians* and *Scythians* felt the wonderful power and prevalency of it, as well as the softer and better disposed *Greeks* and *Romans*: The Word preached with Power overcame all human Nature, saith *Origen*.

But God doth in the most extraordinary cases, use sometimes ordinary means;

and

παρὰ τὸ
φύσιν ἀν-
θρώπων ὁ
κύριος δυνα-
μειος λα-
λήθει
λόγῳ καὶ
ἐκείνηκε.
Contr.
Cels. l. 2.
p. 68.

~
 Sermon
 VIII.

and especially was this observable, that at that very time of our Saviour's Birth, the Gates of the Temple of *Janus* at *Rome* were shut, which were only in the time of an universal Peace; and which had happened but twice from the foundation of that City, till the Reign of *Augustus* (though twice before this in his Reign, as I remember.)

And this was a very fit season for the *Prince of peace* to appear in, and what in this sence did verify the Angels Anthem at his Birth, *Luke 2. 14. On earth peace, good will amongst, as well as towards Men.*

And so I am brought to the Evangelical State; where I am,

4th General, To shew the Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, and that there is not to be any other Revelation to the end of the world; so it is here, *hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son*; which implies,

1. The close and conclusion of all, it is *in the last days*.

2. The Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, it is *by his Son*.

1. The close of all, it is *in the last days*. To which all former Ages had a relation, and in which, being *the last*, they were to be consummated.

Here,

Here, setting aside all subdivisions of time, we may consider the world, as to Revelation, under a twofold Period, *viz.* the Former and the Latter days. Sermon VIII.

And so the Prophets speak of *the last days*, as different from what both were before, or what were in their own time. Isai. 2. 2.
Mic. 4. 1.

Now in *these last days*, there is a certain part of time circumscribed, which in reason is to have such characters belonging to it as it may be known by them when it was to commence, without which the *Epocha* was not to be determined. So that the first thing to be considered is, When these *last days* began, and what are the Characters by which that time is to be known?

And they are such as these,

(1.) The appearance of a Person, that from his spirit and temper, the Scripture calls *Elijah*, *Mal. 3, 1. and 4. 5.* who was to be the Forerunner of the *Messiah*, and to *prepare the way* for his reception.

(2.) The Restauration of the Spirit of Prophecy, which ceased among the *Jews* from the time of *Zechary* and *Malachi*, (as has been before observed) and was to be restored in *the last days*. *Joel. 2. 28.*
Acts 2. 16.

(3.) Many Impostors which were to appear, and who did not appear till about

~~~~~  
 Sermon  
 VIII.

bout the time of the *last days*, according to our computation of them; so 1 *John* 2. 18. *It is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.* *Matth.* 24. 5, 24.

(4.) *The last days* were, when the Messiah himself did appear, *called the fulness of time*, *Gal.* 4. 4. and so it is exprefs in the Text, *both in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.* To which we may add the Conversion of the *Gentiles*, *Isa.* 2. 2. and *61.* 1, &c.

From whence it is evident, that there is sufficient ground for these two Periods, *viz.* the Former and the Latter days; and that the Latter began with our Saviour, and continue to the end of the world, whensoever that shall happen: And therefore as it is called *the fulness of time*, because it is the completion and consummation of all; so it is called *the close of the Ages*, (we translate it *the end of the world*) or *the last days*, because there were none to come after the expiration of this; and comprehends in it (as aforesaid) all the space of time from Christ's first, to his second Appearance. *Heb.* 9. 26. *Acts* 1. 11.

Σωτήρια  
 τῶν αἰώνων.  
*Heb.* 9. 26.

And

And so there can be no other time, and so no other Revelation; for as long as the *last days* hold, so long the present Revelation is to continue; and then there can no more be any other Revelation, than there can be *last days* beyond the last.

Sermon  
VIII.

And this will be confirmed by the next Branch.

2. The Perfection of the Gospel Revelation, included in that phrase, God in these last days hath spoken to us by his Son.

'Tis but reasonable to suppose, that since there has been a gradual Progression in Revelation from time to time, and from a lower to a higher degree (as has been already proved) that the honour of all in the close should be reserved for the Son of God; to whom the Prophets were Harbingers, and the Angels themselves Ministers. This is the foundation of the Apostle's Argument, and the drift of his Discourse, in this Chapter, beginning with the Text, *God who at sundry times — hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things — being made so much better than the Angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they: for unto which of the Angels*



~~~~~  
 Sermon
 VIII.

Angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, &c?

Now as the Son is the last that appears, so beyond his there cannot be supposed to be any other Revelation, but that the Revelation must be like to himself, Perfect and Compleat; and so there can be no other Gospel; and whosoever pretends to another, falls under the *AnatHEMA* of the Apostle, *Gal. 1. 8, 9. If any preach any other gospel than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* For here it is;

1. That we find the great Prophecies fulfilled in the Messiah; whose Characters, though many, all center in our Saviour, as to Person, Time, Place, Qualifications, and Event.

2. In Him are all the Types, fulfilled, and all the *good things* accomplished, which the Rites of the Law were the *shadow of*, *Heb. 10. 1.*

3. By him is the most Perfect Revelation of the Will of God made known to the world, of all that God has promis'd and we may expect.

4. By him have we the most Perfect Rule, the Highest Motives, most Noble Principles, and Glorious Rewards, and all things that conduce to the Perfection and Happiness of Mankind.

So

So that to any one that reads and compares those several Dispensations before spoken of together, as he must acknowledge there is this Gradation, so that the Christian Institution is for the Matter and the Evidence of it superior to all; and it will be as evident, that it can be exceeded by none.

For it is as perfect as can or need to be; for we cannot ascend higher in our Notions and Conceptions of things than we are there taught. We cannot exceed its Rules in our Practice, nor be defective in any necessary part of our Duty, if we advise with and observe it: Nor can we desire more excellent Encouragements and Rewards than are therein proposed, such as are Eternal. So that though the Law of Nature, or of Moses *made nothing perfect, yet the bringing in of a better hope* by the Gospel did, *Heb. 7. 19.*

And now we have nothing farther to expect, no more another Revelation than another Messiah; no more than another God to reward us, and another Heaven to reward us with.

And with this I am to conclude, having passed, by God's Assistance, through the several Heads I at first proposed in the beginning of this Lecture. The Argument is the most Noble Subject in Religion

ligion; what has been wanting in the Sermon Management of it, is to be ascribed to the Weakness and Imperfection of the Instrument: But if there has been any thing offer'd, which may tend to the farther Proof and Confirmation, the Illustration and Improvement of it; it is to be ascribed to God, who is *the giver of every good gift.*

From him must we wait for the Blessing and Success, and *To Him be all Honour and Glory, &c.*

S E R M O N I.

The Second Year.

GAL. I. 8, 9.

Though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

THE People of the *Jews* having been all along trained up under the Law of *Moses*, and by virtue of it possess'd of peculiar Advantages beyond any
 T other

•

other Nation, were apt to think it as lasting in its Obligation, as Divine in its

I. Original; and that it was no more in the intention of Almighty God to have it abolished, than it could be disproved to have come immediately from him. This made them flow and backward to receive the Gospel, by which their ancient Constitution would be disannulled; and after they had believed, it made them inclinable to hearken to such Sophisters, as pretended to compound the Controversy, and to join *Moses* and Christ, the Law and the Gospel together, so as to be both alike necessary to Salvation: Which is in effect to set up another Gospel than what the Apostle had taught, and they had received from him; and therefore he expresses his resentment and indignation against it with the highest aggravations, *Verses 6, 7, 8. I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel; Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ: But though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed, &c.*

In discoursing upon which words: I shall consider,

I. What

1. What is understood by the *Gospel*, which the Apostle had preached, and they had received. Sermon I.

2. What by *another Gospel*, against which and the Preachers of it, the Apostle so sharply inveighs, and pronounces an *Anathema*.

3. I shall shew that the Gospel is the only Revelation from God; and that there is not another, nor is any other to be expected.

1. The Gospel is here opposed to the Law of *Moses*, which there were some in the Churches of *Galatia*, as well as in Acts 15. other places, that would maintain to be necessary to Salvation, if not alone, yet in conjunction with the Gospel (as afore-said). These two indeed were so far consistent, that the Law was a prefiguration, a Shadow and Type of the Gospel: But being thus a Shadow and a Type of it, That in reason and from the nature of the thing, was to give way, when the Substance came on, and the Types were fulfilled. And therefore though the Law was established at the first by Divine Authority, yet in course was it to cease in its obligation, when the reason of it ceased: And consequently, to plead for its Authority and Obligation, whether in conjunction with, or opposition to the

T 2

Gospel


~~~~~  
Sermon

I.

Gospel, was to say that the substance of those Shadows, the completion of those Types, was not accomplished, that Jesus was not the *Messiah*, nor the Gospel true. In this sense these two that in a state of subordination were consistent, by this means were made to be opposites to each other.

So the Apostle, *Chap. 5. 2. If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. V. 4. — Ye are fallen from grace*; ye at the same time deny what you seem to confess; it is a perverting the Gospel of Christ, and establishing another Gospel.

But this is only a kind of a negative account of the Gospel; therefore we are to proceed farther in the consideration of it; and then we are to understand by the Gospel, the Christian Religion, and more especially that part of it which is called Christian, and for which the Professors of it are called Christians, as distinguished from all Religions besides. All mankind are not more of the same common Nature, than they generally agree in the common Principles of Nature: And that which is natural to all, cannot be a Character by which one man is distinguished from another. But when a Man or Institution is called Christian, it is for somewhat peculiar, and distinct from that which is common to all. And there-

therefore though the Law of Nature be a branch of the Christian Religion, as it was of the *Mosaical*, and is also in it self of a never-failing obligation; yet there is a supervenient Institution, and somewhat besides that, which denominates us to be Christians, without the belief and practice of which, we can no more be entitled to that Character, than that can be called a Natural Religion which excludes, or is contradictory to the Laws of Nature, and the just Reason of Mankind.

Sermon  
I.

And of the number of such Principles, which are necessary to the Constitution of Christianity, and consequently to the Character of a Christian, and are the Articles of his Faith, are the Incarnation and Nativity, the Death and Resurrection and Glorification of our Saviour.

1. His Nativity and Incarnation. So *1 John 4. 2, 3. He that denieth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.*

2. His Death, as he died for Mankind, and was a Sacrifice for Sin. So *St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 1, 2, 3. I declare unto you the Gospel, which also ye have heard, and wherein ye stand, by which also ye are saved. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.* So that to believe in Jesus as the

T 3

Messiah,

*Messiah*, and as a Suffering *Messiah*, was  
 Sermon according to the Scriptures, and by the  
 I. belief of which we are to be saved.

Phil. 2. 8,

9.

1 Tim. 2.

5, 6.

Hebr. 9.

14, 15, 23.

1 John 2.

1, 2.

3. His Resurrection, and what was consequent upon it, his Glorification, the reward of his Humiliation. In which state he is constituted our Mediator. From the connexion betwixt which two, his Death and Intercession it is, that we seldom read in Scripture of the one without the other.

These are constituent and essential Articles of Christianity; and if these, or any of these are omitted, as it is not Christianity which is left, and it would be another Gospel; so it is what the Apostle's Anathema will be applicable to.

From whence we may be able to answer the next Question.

2. What is to be understood by *another Gospel*?

When the Apostle speaks here of *another Gospel*, he thereby means somewhat that is added to it, and with it made necessary to Salvation, as it was when the observation of the Law of *Moses* was maintained to be as obligatory to the Christians, as ever it had been to the *Jews*.

From which Case, by a parity of Reason we may argue, 1. That whatever alters the Terms and Conditions of the Gospel,  
 and



and makes that necessary to Salvation which the Gospel has not made necessary; or that unnecessary which the Gospel has made necessary, is such a perverting it as makes it another Gospel: For that is to set up that as a Divine Revelation, which hath not the Divine Authority to confirm it.

For it is God alone that can appoint the Terms of Salvation; and so, what no Man, or Society of Men, has any Authority in, to frame, alter or revoke. The necessary Articles of Faith, and Instances of our Duty, must have a Divine Establishment; and so what we must learn either from the invariable Principles and Dictates of Human Nature, or pure Revelation.

2. That is *another Gospel* which pretends to a Revelation from God for its Authority, when it is of Human invention or imagination: And that whether for the matter of it, it be true, or false. It may for the matter of it be true, and yet not be a Revelation, but proceed only from Men; and then to place that to the account of Revelation, though it be for the matter of it true, is a notorious Falshood and Imposture. But if for the matter of it, it be false, it's a double Falshood; as it pretends to a Revelation,

~~~~~  
 Sermon I. which is not Revelation, and also calls in the Veracity of God to give testimony to a Falshood.

* Breviar.
 Rom.
 Octob. 8.
 Bellarm.
 de Purg.
 l. 1. c. 11.
 de Euchar.
 l. 3. c. 8.

Supposing then that the immaculate Conception of the Virgin *Mary*, Transubstantiation and Purgatory are true, yet to plead a Revelation for them, as it is pleaded in the Church of *Rome* *, if there were no such Revelation, doth fix such an indelible blot upon that pretended Infallible Church, as all the Water of *Tiber* cannot cleanse. But if it should prove false (as those things certainly are) then it is to add a sort of Blasphemy to the Imposture, as it makes the God of Truth to justify a Falshood.

3. That is another Gospel, which doth establish another Rule, or adds to, or detracts from that which is established, *Rev.* 22. 18.

Now the Scripture is the Rule of Faith and Practice; and then to alter the Rule, by adding to it, or taking from it, is to alter the Gospel (which that contains the Revelation of) as they do in the Church of *Rome*, who not only add the *Apocrypha* to the Canon; but, as the *Pharisees* of old, give the same Authority to unwritten Tradition, as to the Scripture; and require it to be received *with the like pious regard*, according to the Council of *Trent*.

Lastly,

Lastly, To alter, to add to, or diminish from the Fundamental Articles or Principles of it, is to make it another Gospel; as it is to deny Christ to be a Mediator, or to appoint other Mediators than him, such as Angels and Saints.

Sermon
I.

By so doing, the Gospel is rendred as imperfect, and the Scripture as an imperfect Revelation of it. But this there is no occasion for, as I shall now shew by proving, That

3. The Gospel, or Revelation, made known to the World by Jesus Christ, is always to continue the same; and no new, or other Revelation is to be expected.

This was the Sum of the last Lecture, and is to be the remaining Subject of this.

There have been such, in several Ages of the Church, both anciently, and of late, that have pretended to new Revelations; and that there was a more perfect Dispensation to ensue, than what was contained in the Gospel. Of this Opinion were the *Montanists* of old; and of this mind seems to have been *Abbas Joackim*, who flourished about the Year 1200. And what was also expressly maintained in the *Evangelium Aeternum*, or *Everlasting Gospel*, chiefly taken out of the Works of *Joackim*, and published by the *Mendicant Fryars* about 1254. Wherein it was affirmed, * That

Math.
Par. Hist.
Ann. Dom.
1255.

the

the Doctrine of that Abbot excelled that Sermon of Christ: * That the Gospel of Christ was to give way to another Gospel, called the Everlasting Gospel; or Gospel of the Holy Ghost.

Eymericus,
Dire& In-
quisit.
Gul. de
S. Amore
de peric.
noviss. temp.
Prateolus
de Har. l. 4.
V. Dr. Stil-
lingfleet,
Fanaticism
of the Ro-
man Church.

And this was a Doctrine spread far and near, among the *Beguardi* in Germany, the *Alumbrados* in Spain, and the *Fratricelli* in Italy, &c. The Spawn of which continued for a long season in several parts, and in some till *Anno Dom.* 1560. who all agreed, that their Doctrine came from God by as immediate Inspiration as ever the Gospel of Christ did.

I deny not, but that there may be some particular Revelation or Inspiration, with respect to some especial Case: But as it may arise, for ought we know, from imagination, so if it be not attended with great caution and circumspection, may end in the Whims and Frenzies of a *Brigit*, a *Catharina*, or a Mother *Juliana*, and what not? Nay, it may proceed to the disannulling the Gospel it self, and to the preferring their own Inspirations (as they will have it) above it.

But supposing it to be true, that there may be now some particular Inspirations from God in such special cases; yet it is to be supposed that they are agreeable to the Gospel Revelation; but if once they

contradict

contradict it, it can be no more a true Revelation, than the Gospel can be false; and yet such must be a Revelation that will make the Gospel to cease in its obligation, and to be of no more Authority to Mankind, than the Law of *Moses*.

Sermon
I.

When the obligation arises not from the nature of the thing, but from positive Institution, it is in the power of the Law-giver to bind or loose, to establish or evacuate a Law as he thinks fit. And thus it was in the Law of *Moses*, which consisted of things typical, that had a special reference to that People, and the place of their Habitation, &c. Such were the distribution of the Tribes, the preservation of their Genealogies, their three great Festivals, their *Sabbatical* Year, and Year of *Jubilee*, &c. Of this temporary nature also were the Ceremonies of the Law, which either had a relation to the Customs of the Nations conterminous to them; or to a more perfect State that was in process of time to succeed it. The Laws relating to which could not be supposed to be of any force, when They were excluded that Land, and the Tribes were lost and confounded; no more than the Laws relating to the Wilderness and the Tabernacle, could oblige them when they

~~~~~  
Sermon

I.

Deut. 29.  
29.

Exod. 12.  
17.  
Lev. 23. 14.

they were settled in *Canaan*, and that they had a Temple erected there.

And therefore the phrase *for ever*, when annexed to that Constitution, must have a laxer interpretation accordingly allowed, which was, That it should continue to oblige, (as it follows often where that Phrase is used) *throughout their generations*; that is, whilst they were that People, so embodied, and so situated.

And had the Gospel consisted of such things that were thus mutable in themselves, or thus peculiar to any People, Time, or Place; there might be reason to admit it to be temporary; and to be evacuated when time should serve, as the Law was; But there is nothing either in the nature of the thing, nor is there any notification of the Divine Will concerning any time set for its expiration; but rather the contrary; and so there is not the same reason for a new Dispensation after the Evangelical, as there was for the Evangelical after the *Mosaical*.

I grant that it is as possible in it self for God to reveal himself at some time hereafter, as it was for him to have revealed himself heretofore: And he that revealed himself under the Law, and at the first Institution of the Gospel, may, if he so please, after the same manner, reveal

himself



himself at any time, or times: But he that will assert the futurity of this, must have more to prove it than a possibility. It is certain God has revealed himself, and that the Gospel was by Revelation from him: But there is not the like certainty for a Revelation after the Gospel, or in after-times of the Gospel, as there is, that the Gospel it self was of Divine Revelation.

It is certain that the Gospel has been the only Revelation for above 1600 years past, and that we have had no other Revelation than that contained in the Scripture: And therefore whatever Pretences any Persons or Age made to it, were apparently Mistakes and Impostures; for that Dispensation of the Holy Ghost, which each Sect fancied to be in their Age, or near to it, is yet to come, if ever it is to be.

*V. Spondani Annal.  
Eccles. Ann.  
Dom. 1204.  
de Almarico.*

But to give some farther light and force to this Argument, I shall shew,

1. That there is no proof of any other Revelation, than the Gospel of our Saviour, and now recorded and preserved in the Holy Scripture.

2. That there is no need of any farther Revelation.

3. That the Scripture shuts up all Revelation with it self, so that no other Revelation is to be expected beyond it.

1. There is no proof of any other Revelation,

~ ~ ~ velation, than what is contained in the Sermon Scripture.

I. If any one will contend, that there either is, or shall be such a Revelation, he must have some Revelation to prove it: And that must either be an antecedent Revelation, such as Scripture is taken to be; or it must be some personal Revelation, made to himself, or to some other credible Person or Persons.

But where is the Revelation of this Revelation?

If it be to be found in Scripture, where is the Prediction of such a State, That the Gospel shall be superannuated, and another of greater perfection shall grow out of it?

Under the Law there was a plain signification of another Revelation to be in the time of the *Messiah*; and of a more perfect state of things to ensue. But where are the Proofs as plain under the Gospel for a New Revelation, as there were for that of the Gospel under the Law? Or where is it said of that, as it is of the Law, that it *decayeth*, or is antiquated, and *waxeth old*, and so is ready to, or shall at last *vanish away*? Our Apostle here saith on the contrary, *If we, or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which*

*we*

we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

Sermon  
L.

If it be a personal Revelation, then we may reasonably demand, Where is the Evidence for such a Revelation?

All Revelation must have a sufficient Evidence; and if it be a true Revelation, and what obliges us to receive it as such, it will be able to produce its Evidence.

And a New Revelation must suppose a better sort of Evidence than the former, or at least equal to it. There must be the like wonderful Works; the Blind must as miraculously be made to see, and the Lame to walk, and the Diseased to be whole, and the Dead to rise. Nay, Christ himself must again descend from Heaven, and dye, and rise, and ascend; or else the Miracles will fall short of what it is in competition with.

Nay, it must proceed farther, and its Evidence must not only be equal, but superior also to that which it is to supplant. It was not only fit that *Moses's* Rod should be turn'd into a Serpent, but when the Magicians pretended to do the same, to shew his Power to be greater than theirs, his Serpentine Rod swallowed up theirs.

It was not enough that he brought forth Frogs, when *Jannes* and *Jambres* produced the like; but that he should do what

Exod. 7. 12.

2 Tim. 3. 8.



~~~~~  
Sermon

I.

Exod. 8.
18, 19.

John 15.
24.

what they could not, and so what would oblige them to acknowledge it to be *the Finger of God.*

And thus our Saviour being to advance a new Scheme of things, did not only shew he was the Person described, and prophesied of; but also by his numerous Miracles, and many of them such as never any, neither *Moses*, nor any Prophetical Person, ever did work.

If then there be no such Evidence for such a new Revelation, (where there is a pretence to it) we may conclude it to be *another Gospel*, a supposititious Revelation, and what is to have no credence given to it, no regard paid to it. It's Anathema.

2. There is no need of any farther Revelation. Revelation has somewhat in it of a Miracle; it is a way extraordinary; and as we cannot suppose God will work Miracles, and break through the standing Laws of Nature, when there is no occasion for it, nor necessity to require it: So we cannot suppose he will communicate himself by a way of Revelation, and immediate Inspiration, and much less break down an Established Order of his own appointment, when there is as much reason for the Continuance of it, as for the Institution; and that it answers all the
Ends

Ends for which a new Constitution can be framed, or a new Revelation made. Sermon

The Apostle argues, *If the first Covenant had been faultless, there should no place have been sought for the second:* I. Heb. 8. 7.

And if *there be a place* for a Third, there must be some fault or imperfection chargeable upon the Second. But that I shall shew it to be freed from; and that the Second Covenant or Gospel-Revelation is so perfect, that there is no need of another. For,

(1.) There can be no more noble and useful Subject for a Revelation, than that of the Gospel, which is concerning God's Reconciliation to Mankind, and their Redemption by the Death of his Son.

And where this is plainly revealed, there is no place for a Second, nor any need of a new Revelation.

(2.) If we consider the Gospel-Revelation as a Covenant, consisting of Promises and Conditions; there cannot be more excellent and beneficial than those, nor more necessary than these.

For what can be proposed of greater advantage unto Mankind, than what the Gospel offers to those that believe and obey it? It is no less than the favour of God, the blessing and protection of his Providence, the assistance of his Spirit,

U

and

and in the close of all, Everlasting Life,
 Sermon a translation out of this mortal, uncomfortable, and uncertain State, to a State of unchangeable Happiness; where Body and Soul shall again be united, *When this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.* An Encouragement that is the highest Cordial that can work upon Humane Nature, and will (if any Consideration can) qualify the Troubles of this present Life, and set a Man above the fears of an exclusion out of it.

1 Cor. 15.
 53.

And when this is promised, there can nothing be offer'd beyond it; nor is there any need to find out others after this is proposed.

And such as the Promises are, such are the Conditions required of us, which are as unchangeable as the Reward: Those indeed are unchangeable from the Divine Declaration, and God's faithfulness; but these are unchangeable from the nature of the things, as well as the Divine Command. So that there is no room for another Revelation, unless we can change the nature of things, and make *evil good, and good evil; and put darkness for light, and light for darkness;* unless we will dissolve all Order, and confound all Relations, and set the Creature loose from all

all obligations of Love, and Gratitude, and Service to the Creator. Terms surely uncapable of abatement or alteration. For who can suppose Mankind should be left at liberty, whether they would love God, or neglect him; whether obey, or violate his Laws; whether they would be virtuous or vicious; and whether they would believe in Jesus, and own him to be their Saviour; or, with the *Jews*, reject him, and *not have him to reign over them?* Alter the Promises and Conditions, and there is *another Gospel*, and another Revelation; but till they are altered, or alterable, there needs no New Revelation.

Sermon
I.

All the abatements or relaxations that can be allowed, are inserted into the body of this Revelation; where there is a two-fold allowance; an allowance of remission for whatever sins are past, and truly repented of; and an allowance for Humane Infirmities under the strictest obligations to our Duty. And lower than these the Gospel doth not, nor for the reason before given, can descend; since then it would countenance Impenitence, and establish Iniquity by a Law; and then indeed it had been an imperfect, a defective, a faulty Covenant, and there would have been a place for a New.

~~~~~  
 Sermon  
 I.

(3.) The extent of this Law, or New Covenant, is such as none can exceed it; for it is as much fitted for the whole Race of Mankind, as any could be for any particular Nation. The Law of *Moses* was a Law to the *Jews*, suited to their Temper and Circumstances in its original Frame and Constitution; and so what other Nations, as Nations, could not come within the benefit of; nor could particular Persons, otherwise than as they became Profelytes, and made themselves subject to it by the same way of initiation in Circumcision. And it is of the nature of all Humane Laws (though the general Lines running through them are one and the same) that they are fitted for the immediate use and service of that People, whose Laws they are; and which therefore vary infinitely, and alter as Circumstances alter, and as Reasons of State require.

But now the Gospel-Dispensation comprehends in it all Nations, and they are all to that as if they were but one People. It was our Saviour's Commission to his Apostles after his Resurrection, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* And such as the Commission was, such were the Rules and Precepts they were to give and publish, which were

Matth. 28.  
 19.  
 Mark 16.  
 15.

were of universal concernment and obligation; and neither confined by Persons nor Places, by Times nor Circumstances, but what all Persons, in all Places, Times and Circumstances, are equally obliged to observe; and which are of that nature, and have such a tendency to the good welfare and happiness of Mankind, whether alone, or in Society, whether as particular Persons, or Families, or Nations; that if exactly observed, purity, and peace, and love would every where abound, and the Earth be a kind of Paradise again.

Sermon

L

And therefore, if there be any Narrowness of Mind, and feuds among Mankind, if Vice and Wickedness overflow the World, it is not for want of a Law every way perfect to bind and restrain them; or that there needs *another Gospel* to mend them; but for the reason given by St. James,—*from their lusts that war in their members.* James 4. 1.

(4.) If we consider the Evidence given to the Gospel-Revelation, we shall find there needs no other evidence to be given to that Revelation; nor that there needs any other Revelation for want of Evidence in this. Our Saviour's Life was a Life of Miracles as well as Innocence; and wherever he went, the Divine Power



Sermon

I.

Colos. 2. 9.

went along with him; for *in him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily*. And which he exerted wherever he came, and as occasion served, to the confusion, if not the conviction or conversion of his Adversaries; and all which at last concluded in his own Resurrection from the dead, his Ascension into Heaven, and the effusion of the Holy Ghost, which began on *Pentecost*, but like a Torrent ran on through the Apostolical Age, and bore down all manner of competition. And what then can any Revelation pretend to beyond it? Or where can there be any that can be suppos'd to produce the like Evidence for its veracity? (as I have just before observ'd).

Jude 3.

Lastly, How can we have a Gospel that can pretend to vye with that which the Son of God came into the World to reveal, who was the last that was to come from Heaven; and when our *Faith* is that which was once *delivered to the Saints. Once for all*; and so there is no more another Faith or Revelation to be expected after that, than another Mediator after Him, who was *once offered to bear the sins of many*.

Heb. 9. 28.

This leads to the Third Branch.

3. The Scripture shuts up all with this Revelation; and because we have now no Revela-

Revelation but that Written Revelation, we cannot suppose any Revelation beyond it, and much less derogatory to it; or that shall direct us to any other way by which we are to be saved, than that we *have already received*, and is therein recorded. Sermon I.

I have before observed, that the time from our Blessed Saviour's appearance, and the publication of the Gospel by him (to his second coming) is called the *last days* in Scripture, and consequently has none to succeed it. So the Apostle, *As it is appointed unto Men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without a sin-offering, unto Salvation.* That is, as there is no alteration in the state from Death unto Judgment, but as Men dye, so they will appear to be at Judgment: So there is no alteration to be between Christ's first appearing, when he offer'd himself, and his Second, when he shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into Heaven. Serm. VIII. of the last Year. Heb. 9. 27, 28. Acts 2. 11.

If therefore there is to be any alteration as to this Revelation, it is not to be before, but must be after our Saviour's second appearance. But of that we have nothing to say.

~  
Sermon  
I.

Thus far as I have consider'd the Argument, there may be very few supposed to be concerned; that is, such as set up another Revelation in opposition to the Gospel-Revelation; or that maintain the Revelation of the Gospel to be only temporary, and that it shall have its season in which it is to expire, and be succeeded by another. And it may seem to be scarcely worth the while to have spent so much time upon it, with respect to such wild Enthusiasts as have been, and still are in the World.

P.

But however, what has been hitherto said, may be of farther use with reference to another Case, just mentioned before, and that is the Case of personal and occasional Revelation; which may be conceived only to serve to a more spiritual Manifestation of the Revelation already received, and so be no more derogatory to that Revelation, than occasional or personal Revelation heretofore in the *Mosaical* State was to the Body of that Law, which was of immediate and Divine Revelation, and of universal Obligation to that People.

I would not altogether deny this; because I know not how far some Persons may in some cases be enlightned by a Spirit of Prophecy; nor what particular  
5  
Directions



Directions they may receive in an extraordinary way in some special Cases with respect to themselves, to others, and the Church of God; which may be like a special Providence to some particular Persons. But, now as a Man must govern himself by the general Rules of Divine Providence, and not by particular; and because he has sometimes met with Deliverances, and Supplies, and Directions beyond all his own foresight and reasoning, must not forsake his own reasoning and care, and wholly rely upon the extraordinary: So it is to be here; a Person may perhaps have some occasional Revelation, some Divine Inspiration, at some special Season, or in some special Case; but if he forsakes the Ordinary to depend upon the Extraordinary, and expects Revelation in every Case, because he has had it in some particulars, he will as much be subject to error, and err no less dangerously, than if he wholly relied upon Divine Providence, and forsook all other means whatsoever.

And truly this is a way much liable to be abused, and to mislead Persons, and is very suspicious and dangerous.

I. It is a Case liable to imposture and abuse, forasmuch as those that are under the influence of such a conception,

Sermon  
I.

Sermon  
I.

on, are not always, if at all, capable of making a certain judgment of it. For it is all transacted within, and the Imagination may be so much influenced by the Body, and by an agitation of the Humours and Animal Spirits, from an Enthusiastical and even a devout Temper, by prepossessions and preconceived Principles, and even by the Circumstances of Life, that it may be wholly natural; as natural as Dreams, or the Deliriums of a Fever, which proceed from the ebullition of Blood, and such like ordinary Causes.

2. Persons have been imposed upon, and taken the effect of Imagination for Inspiration and Divine Illumination. I am far from condemning all the Instances of this kind of Hypocrisy, and of a design to deceive, like *Maria Visitationis* in *Portugal*. I will rather think more charitably, That very often they have thought themselves thus moved and acted by the Spirit of God; and yet notwithstanding all their Pretences, and the Opinion others have had of them, it has been afterwards evident, that it has been far from being a Divine Infusion and Illumination. What shall we think of *Teresa*, whose Life is full of her Visions and Revelations; and of whom

*Jesus*  
*Maria.*  
*Joseph Te-*  
*refia. com-*  
*posed by Paul*  
*of St. Ubald.*  
1654.

whom we are told by one of that Way,   
That besides many other extatical Sights Sermon  
in the Kingdom of Heaven, she often I.  
had the sight and company of the Holy  
Trinity, of each Person in particular, that  
they spoke to her, and she to them; and  
used to ask, and did obtain particular fa-  
vours of each. — That God shew'd her Part 3.  
how all Creatures are contained in his P. 65, 715  
Divine Essence, as in a Chrystal Glass,  
and that she saw therein the Thoughts,  
Words, and Deeds of all Men. This P. 72.  
(and truly she had reason to think so)  
she said, was one of the greatest favours  
to her.

Now if we would but alter the place,  
and for the Nunnery conceive her to be  
in an Hospital, we should take it to be,  
what that Author in a transport some-  
times calls it, a *Phrenzy*.

And what a Legend of Dreams would  
the World be furnished with, if the Vi-  
sions and Revelations of this kind were  
bundled up together, as the Miracles of  
reputed Saints have sometimes been?

3. They are very much to be suspect-  
ed of Imposture.

*Legenda au-  
rea. Bolan-  
dis, &c.*

(1.) And that because we read so lit-  
tle of this way in Scripture, even in the  
Apostolical



~~~~~ Apostolical Times, and nothing to encourage us in the expectation of it afterwards: We read nothing there of the

I.
Ulbald.

p. 14, 16,
41.

Acts 10.

10.

2 Cor. 12.

1, &c.

Union of the Soul to the Divine Essence, of its being absorpt and drowned over head and ears, and ingulphed in the depth of Divinity, so that it became one and the same with God, by a true Deification. We read there sparingly of some Extasies; as one of St. Peter, and one or two of St. Paul; but with how much reserve and modesty doth the Holy Apostle speak, when he comes to *Visions and Revelations of the Lord*, when he heard *unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a Man to utter?*

But what can be greater, if these of *Teresa* be true? And where might we more expect to be entertained with the Relations of such *Rapts*, as in the Gospel? So that when they are there so unusual, and here so frequent, that even Societies are embodied and formed from it, we have reason to suspect.

(2.) It's much to be suspected, when that which is the proper means of judging, and of distinguishing Imagination from Revelation, is laid aside, which is Reason; and when all is resolved into the Person's own Testimony and Assurance.

We

We are required in all Cases to *search*, and to *try*, which doth suppose the free exercise of our Reason; and when this is rejected, 'tis a sign there is no truth in the thing pretended. Sermon I.

(3.) It is suspicious, when they exalt their own private Revelations to the same Authority with the Revelations of Holy Writ; and seek to justify the one by the other.

(4.) When they esteem the way of Religion, as describ'd in Scripture, to be mean, in comparison of this that they are in, and prefer this way of Contemplation and Inspiration above the plain Precepts of Christianity: When it is a condescension in them to joyn in External Worship. Thus it is given by Father *Ubalde*, as an instance of the attainment of one among them to some degree of this rapturous State, that when the hour of Prayer was spent, *he could hardly be persuaded that it was so, not knowing what Prayer he was in.* P. 57. n. 4.

And the famous *Quietist*, *Molinos*, reports of *Gregory Lopez*, "That having for the space of three Years continued that Ejaculation, *Thy Will be done in Time, and in Eternity*; repeating it as often as he breathed; God discovered
" to *Spiritual Guide*, l. 1. c. 17. n. 135.

~~~~~  
 Sermon " to him that infinite Treasure of the  
 I. " pure and continued Act of Faith and  
 " Love; and that during the thirty six  
 " Years he lived after, he always con-  
 " tinued that pure Act of Love, with-  
 " out ever uttering the least Petition,  
 " Ejaculation, or any thing that was  
 " sensible.

So that all is by this means resolved  
 into a spiritual and senseless Frame and  
 Course, a certain stillness and quietness,  
 as *Molinos* expresseth it, *When the Soul*  
*doth not know whether it be alive or dead,*  
*lost or gained, agrees or resists; this, saith*  
*he, is the true resigned Life.* Where  
 there is no External Service for the Mind  
 to be concerned in, no External Object  
 to be attended to.

A State of Perfection that is above  
 what the Gospel doth describe; and is  
*another Gospel* than what we have in  
 Scripture received; and which there  
 needs an uncontrollable Evidence for;  
 the want of which increaseth the suspi-  
 cion. For,

(5.) There is no Evidence for all this  
 beyond their own simple affirmation.  
 And who is there without good Evidence  
 that can believe that those Rapturous  
 Ladies, (such as *Santa Teresa*, and *Don-*



na Marina d'Escobar) did in Molinos's Phraſe, *hear and talk with God hand to hand*; when he reads the interlocutory matters that are ſaid to have paſſed be-

Sermon

I.

Ibid. Preface, n. 17.

tween them; as for Example, *Whenever (ſaith Teresa) the Lord commanded me any thing, if my Confessor told me another; I turned to the Lord, and told him, that I must obey my Confessor.* This, ſaith that grave Man upon it, is ſound and true Doctrine, which ſecures Souls; or rather confounds and deſtroys them. This puts me in mind of what the ſame Author elſewhere obſerves, *The deſire of Revelations uſes to be a great hindrance to the interiour Soul, eſpecially to Women; and there is not an ordinary Dream, but they will chriſten it with the name of a Viſion.*

L. 2. c. 2.

& c. 9.

n. 71.

Ibid. l. 2.

c. 6. n. 46.

The World, eſpecially one part of it, has been much impoſed upon, when credulous this way. The Pretence aboveſaid, of *Maria Viſitationis*, is an Inſtance beyond all exception, who impoſed upon her Confessor (no leſs a Man than *Lewis Granada*) the Inquiſition, and even on the Pope himſelf: And yet notwithſtanding ſhe pretended to ſomewhat more than internal for her Converſe with our Saviour, &c.

V. Lud. 2

Param. de

Orig. In-

quiſit. &

Bp. Wor.

Fanat. of

the Church

of Rome;

and Dr. Ge-

dis of the

Eccleſiaſti-

cal State

of Ethio-

pia. Appen-

was dix.

was detected at last of notorious Imposture posture.

I. But most of the Visionaries (we are speaking of) pretended not to so much. And therefore where there is no external Evidence attempted by them, nor that we have the Gift of Intuition to see into their inward and Self-evidence, we have no reason to think otherwise of such Illuminations, and Introversions, and Interlocutions, than at best the effects of an heated Imagination. But of this before.

P. And so much the rather are we to be careful in these matters, and not to be too easy of belief,

4. Because it may be very dangerous in the consequence of it. For if instead of a Star, it should prove an *Ignis fatuus*, whither may not Persons be led under the delusion of it? For what will not be concluded to be lawful, nay, a Duty, which Revelation shall warrant? And where will this end, if it once be credited, and that we commit our selves implicitly and blindly to such an uncertain Guide, so that in the issue such a Spirit of Revelation, as it is not promised by God, and therefore not reasonable

sonable to be expected; so it is not to be desired.

Sermon

I shall conclude this with a Saying of one conversant in that way, *You must not think them holiest, that have Consolations, Visions, and Revelations; for many are great Saints that never had any of them; and others that had Visions and Gusts are not therefore Saints; for true Sanctity doth consist in solid vertue, and true conformity of our will to the will of God in all things, &c.*

Ubal. ibid. part 3. c. 6. n. 11.

I freely acknowledge that there will be a great alteration in the present State of the Church, before the close of the whole, and before an end shall be put to Christ's Mediatory Kingdom upon Earth; When the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the Mountain; and all Nations shall flow unto it. When the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, &c. and that the Earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea; that there shall be but one Church over all the World, by the conversion of the Jews, and the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles; and that by the coming down of the New Jerusalem from Heaven, it shall be in a State of perfect Peace; and there shall

Isa. 2. 2, &c.

Ch. 11. 6, &c.

Revel. 21. 1, &c.



be in that sence *a new Heaven and a new Earth.* But that is a State in reserve;

II, and there will need no evidence for that which will be self-evident.

2 Pet. 3.  
13, 14.

In the mean time, if *we, according to his promise, look for a new Heaven, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness,* let us, according to the Apostle's Advice, *be diligent, that we be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.* Amen,

---

S E R.

# SERMON II.

---

JOHN V. 39.

*Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have Eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me.*

**A**FTER that our Saviour had cured the Impotent Man at the Pool Bethesda, Ver. 9. the Jews sought to Slay him, because he had Healed him on the Sabbath-day, Ver. 16. And so much the more were they bent upon this, as in Vindication of himself he had said also that God was his [*ἰσθι*] own proper Father, making himself equal with God, Ver. 18.

Our Saviour therefore, in the following part of this Chapter, largely insists upon the Explication and Proof of what he had asserted, and appeals to a Three-fold Testimony for his Justification, viz.

X 2 (1.) That

~ (1.) That of *John Baptist*, who bore Witness of him, and to whom *for a season*,

II, they gave Credit, *Ver. 32, 33, 34, 35.*

(2.) His own Works, *Ver. 36. they, saith he, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* (3.) The Scriptures, *Ver. 46.*

*Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. And in the Text; Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think, &c.*

The Words may be either an Appeal to the *Jews*, and so are to be read by way of Affirmation and Concession, *ye do search the Scriptures*, as it is in the Margin: Or they may be read Imperatively and by way of Exhortation, as it is in our Version, *Search ye the Scriptures.*

If we admit the former; then they are a Reproof to the *Jews*, that professed to be very conversant in those Sacred Books, so that not a Word, Syllable or Title should escape their notice (as it's said in After-times of the *Masorites*), and yet so little heeded what was the main Subject of them, that they observed not how the Characters belonging to the *Messias* pointed plainly to him.

But I conceive the Words are to be understood as an Exhortation, as the way of our Saviour's arguing doth shew, which is from point to point, from *John Baptist*,



to his own Works; and from his Works to the Scriptures: And so St. *Basil* and St. *Athanasius* understand them.

Sermon  
II.

[Basil. l. 2.  
Bapt. c. 4.  
Athanas.  
Tom. 2.  
p. 295.  
Par. 1527.]

If the Words contain a Duty, then they are an Appeal of our Saviour to the highest Authority, that is, Divine Revelation; and what even the *Jews* themselves admitted for such. So that should they reject the Testimony of *John Baptist*, whom they did at one time believe to be a Prophet: Or should they be so perverse (as they sometimes were) as to impute our Saviour's miraculous Works to *Beelzebub*; yet the Scriptures were a proof not to be gain-said. For they themselves thought and judged (as the word *doxare* signifies) that *Eternal Life* was therein Revealed, and by the direction whereof it was to be obtained; and yet even those did testify of him. Having brought the controversy thus far, it would in reason be at an end: Thither therefore he remits them, to their Authority he Appeals, these he requires them to Search; and if they Searched, and Searched sincerely and impartially, they would find Him (whom they now traduced, and whose Life they sought) to be the *Messias* there described. So he concludes his Discourse, *There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.* For had

~ ye believed Moses and his Writings, ye  
 Sermon would have believed me: for he wrote of  
 II. me, *Vers. 45, 46.* or as it is in the Text,  
*They testify of me.*

From the Words I observe;

1. That notwithstanding there is a Revelation from God, and owned to come from him; yet there may be Disputes about Points contained in that Revelation. It was so here, the *Jews* as well as our Saviour believed the Old Testament to be a Divine Revelation, and to contain all things necessary to Everlasting Life; and yet there was a Dispute about an Article of no less Importance, than whether our Saviour was the *Messias* therein prophesied of, and whom they hoped for Salvation by.

2. There is a Direction what to do in this Case, and that is to repair to the Rule; *Search the Scriptures*, impartially Examine them, and compare what is therein Revealed with what our Saviour affirmed concerning himself.

3. There is the final Decision of the Case, and that is by the Scriptures. You grant, saith he, they contain all things necessary to *Eternal Life*, and they are *they which testify of me.* Thereby he is willing to abide, and thereby they ought to be concluded.

4. Here

4. Here is a farther Direction how to *Search*, implied in the Verses following, Sermon  
*Vers. 41, &c.* and that is, with Humility II.  
and Diligence; with Impartiality and  
Sincerity, without Prejudice and Pre-  
possessions.

The Words, we see, contain a plain Re-  
solution of a Case of great Importance, and  
that is, what is to be done in Matters of  
Doubt or Controversy, and how Persons  
should proceed to obtain due satisfaction.

And here the first thing to be agreed  
upon, is, By what shall we be tried, what  
is the Rule which is to determine us, and  
which we must abide by?

The next thing is, Who shall be the  
Judge?

The Third is, What are the Qualifica-  
tions of such as are to judge?

To the First, our Saviour answers, We  
must go to the *Scriptures*; for if it be a  
matter of Consequence, and concerns  
*Eternal Life*, there to be sure it is contain-  
ed, and there it is to be found.

As to the Second, He saith, The Per-  
sons concerned are to *Search*; those that  
doubt, question or deny, are carefully to  
examine.

As to the Third, He saith, They must  
lay aside all other Interests, and *Search*  
with all Humility, as those that love God,  
and



*and seek after the honour that cometh from him only, Ver. 44.*

II.

So that by this resolution of the Case we have gained two or three considerable Points, towards the resolving all Doubts, and ending all Controversies in the Christian Church: And they are,

1. That the Scriptures are the only Rule, by which we are to judge and determine concerning points of Faith, and things necessary to Salvation.

2. That it appertains to all Persons to have recourse to, and to judge by this Rule concerning matters of that nature, and which are of that Importance.

3. A Direction how to Search, and that is with Modesty and Humility, with Sincerity and Impartiality.

1<sup>st</sup>. The Scriptures are the only Rule by which we are to judge and determine concerning Articles of Faith, and matters necessary to Salvation.

'Tis on all hands granted, that there must be some Authority which Faith is to be resolved into: For Faith is no other than an assent to some Proposition or Propositions upon Authority: And according as the Authority is, such is our Faith, Humane or Divine.

So that Divine Faith must have Divine Authority, and Divine Authority is no other

other than Divine Revelation, delivered *at sundry times and in divers manners*, Sermon  
Written or Unwritten. II.

And where there is no verbal Revelation by Persons divinely Inspired, the Written Word is the only Authority that Faith can be resolved into; which our Saviour here appeals to, and propounds as a means sufficient, and in their Circumstances, as the only means for ending the Dispute.

The Question here in Debate was (as I observed before), Whether Jesus was the Messias prophesied of in the Old Testament? This the *Jews* denied, and our Saviour affirms, appealing for proof of it to *John* Baptist, to his own Works, and to the Scriptures, and there he leaves it. For this was the old and true way of deciding matters of that nature; *To the Law and to the Testimony; if they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them.* Isa. 8. 20.

Indeed in After-ages a party of the *Jews* rose up, that taught for Doctrines the Commandments of Men; that did exalt their Traditions to an equal Authority with the Divine Law, and made it equally a fault to transgress them; as our Saviour charges it upon them (of which more anon); But our Saviour shews the invalidity of this, and directs them to the Fountain of all Revealed Truth, the Holy Scriptures

Matth. 15.  
2, 3, 9.  
Mark 7. 8,  
9.

Scriptures then extant, as a Rule sufficient to guide them, and of Authority sufficient to determine them.

II.

And this was the course he at other times took: As doth the young Ruler put a serious Case to him; *Good Master, What shall I do that I may inherit Eternal Life?* Our Saviour answers, *Thou knowest the Commandments.*

Mark 10.  
17.

Do the Sadduces, that denied a Future State and a Resurrection to it, contend with our Saviour about it? He argues with them from the Scriptures, *Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures. — As touching the Resurrection of the Dead, have ye not read, &c.*

Marth. 22.  
29, 31.

Would he instruct the Disciples in the great Articles of Faith? He doth it from those Sacred Oracles: *Ought not Christ to have suffer'd? &c. And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

Luke 24.  
25, 26, 27.

In like manner did the Apostles proceed to convince the Jews of their Incredulity: So St. Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, *That the Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus is the Christ.* So Apollos shewed by the Scriptures, *That Jesus was the Christ.*

Acts 17.  
2, 3.

Acts 18.  
28.

To



To this they always remitted them, as to a Rule certain and sufficient, and without which nothing was to be received as an Article of Faith. Sermon II.

To a Rule certain, called therefore by St. Peter 2. 1, 19. *A more sure word of Prophecy*, and which he prefers before a Voice from Heaven.

And a Rule sufficient, that is, (as St. Paul saith) *able to make wise unto Salvation*, and *thoroughly to furnish even the Man of God, the Teacher, unto all good Works.* 2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

And when these things were spoken at that time more immediately of the Jewish Canon of the Old Testament, they may equally as well be applied to the New; which is not only as much the *Scripture* (as St. Peter calls it, 2 Pet. 3. 16. as I have before proved) but also by the addition of it, renders the Old much more intelligible and compleat. Sermon VI.

Now there can be no imaginable reason assigned, why the Scripture which was then sufficient in all Points necessary to Salvation, and for resolving of Faith, should now be insufficient after the Revelation made by Christ: That is, that we should be more at a loss with the more clear, full, and perfect Revelation, than they were under the less perfect; that

~ what in the *last days* God deliver'd and  
 Sermon reveal'd *by his Son*, should be less sufficient  
 II. to direct us, than what he *spoke at*  
*sundry times, and in divers manners, in*  
*times past, to the Jews, by the Prophets.*

And especially considering, that there was a time when their Circumstances were much the same with ours, which was in the long interval of 400 or 450 Years between the finishing of the *Jewish* Canon in the Prophecy of *Malachi*, (with whom Revelation ceased) and the appearance of *John Baptist*. In which time they were left, as we are, wholly to the written Word of God for their Direction, and the sole Authority they were to rely upon.

Since then in the Christian Church there is no more need of any Traditionary or Unwritten Word, than the *Jews* had at that time at least, under the Law; and no more proof to be made of it now than there was then; it follows, that the Scripture is the only Rule, in exclusion to all others; and what is not contained therein by positive Proof, nor by evident Consequence to be deduced from it, can no more be of Divine Authority and Obligation to Christians, than unwritten Traditions were then to the *Jews*.

This

This is the true Resolution of Faith; and if our Saviour in a point of such Importance, as his being the Messiah, put the Case upon this issue, we have good reason to think that it is still the true Method of reasoning among Christians, and of resolving any Point of Faith and Doctrine necessary to Salvation. Sermon II.

And therefore supposing we would find out the truth of any Doctrine thus necessary and Fundamental, we must come hither for direction and resolution; and if it has no Foundation in Scripture, we are to reject it. For it is a Rule in the Law, *Quod Instrumentum non dicit, nec nos dicere debemus*; or as it is usually said, Where that has not a Tongue to speak, we are not to have an Ear to hear. 'Tis then a *Doctrine of Men*, and may be a *Tradition of the Elders*, but is no Fundamental Article of the Christian Faith.

But grant this; yet it has been before yielded, that Doubts and Disputes may arise in the Church, about the sense of this written Rule; and therefore who shall be the Arbiter to judge and determine? or how shall the Doubter be resolved? or how shall he be sure of the Sense and meaning of that which is disputed?

Our



Our Saviour here directs what is to be done; *Search the Scriptures*, examine and prove all by this Rule. He doth not direct them to any speaking infallible Guide, nor to any Church, nor Persons into whom their Faith is to be resolv'd, but puts them themselves upon the trial of it. Whence it follows,

2. That every Man is to judge for himself.

Certainly if ever there were a necessity of an infallible Judge to determine points of Controversy to Mens hands, it had been in the long Interval before spoken of, between the Cessation of Prophecy, and the Appearance of our Saviour; when there were divers Sects risen up among the *Jews*, continually contending one with another, and oftentimes about matters of very great Importance.

Of which I shall give a few Instances:

(1.) There was at that time a notable Controversy about the Church, which was the true. This was the Case between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*; as 'tis stated by the Woman of *Samaria*, John 4. 20. *Our Fathers*, saith she to our Saviour, *Worshipped in this Mountain Gerizim, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where Men ought to worship*: That is, ye say, Yours is the true Church,

Church, and we say ours is that true Church: And each of these were so violently addicted to their own way, that *the Jews would have no dealing with the Samaritans*, nor so much as ask drink of them in their necessity, *Ver. 9.* Sermon II.

And on the other side, the *Samaritans* would not so much as receive the *Jews* into their Houses, *Luke 9. 53.*

Nay, so high did the Contest grow between them, that it engaged them in the fiercest Quarrels, even to Assaults and Assassinations, wherever they were, out of *Canaan* as well as in it; as their Historian reports.

And though that *Samaritan Temple* was afterward utterly destroyed by *Hyr- canus*; about 130 Years before our Sa- viour; yet the Prejudices and Animo- sities continued, till both fell under the common and final Destruction by the *Romans*.

*Joseph. Antiq. l. 12. c. 1. & 3.*

*L. 13. c. 6. & 18. l. 20. c. 5.*

(2.) Another point in Controversy was about a Future State, and the Resurrection to it. This was disputed between the *Pharisees* and the *Sadducees*: For the *Sadducees* held that there was no Resurrection, nor Angel, nor separate Spirit, existing out of a Body (for that the *Jews* called a Spirit); but the *Pharisees* confessed both.

*Acts 23. 8. Mat. 22. 23. Luke 24. 37, 39. V. Lightfoot Tal. Exercit. on Acts.*

(3.) Another

 (3.) Another material Controversy that  
 Sermon then divided the Church, was, What was  
 II. the Rule of Faith? For the *Sadducees*  
 (as some Learned Men have thought)  
 would admit the Law of *Moses* only to be  
 of that Authority; and what was not  
 therein contained, was among them ac-  
 counted of no validity; and therefore they  
 denied a Future State, because (as they  
 pretended) there was no proof of it from  
 that Law. But the *Pharisees*, whatever  
 respect they might give to the Law above  
 the other Books of Scripture, yet allow-  
 ed both to be of the same Authority;  
 and so what was contained in any of  
 them, to be the Object of Faith.

Again; The *Sadducees* were for Scrip-  
 ture alone, without any Traditions; but  
 the *Pharisees* set their Traditions in the  
 same Rank with the Scriptures, and  
 would have both of the same Obligati-  
 on (as has been aforesaid) and if either  
 was to give way to the other, the  
 Scripture was rather to give way to  
 Tradition, than Tradition to the Scrip-  
 ture. About which matters there were  
 often great Disputes and Differences be-  
 tween these Two powerful Factions, as  
 the Historian relates; so that however  
 they were mutually concerned in the Go-  
 vernment, yet the Flame broke out upon  
 every

*Joseph. An-  
 tiqu. l. 13.  
 c. 18.*



every occasion, and which St. Paul made his advantage of, who when he perceived that the one part of the Council were *Pharisees* and the other *Sadducees*, cried out, *I am a Pharisee, and the Son of a Pharisee; of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.* By these means they filled the whole Nation with Bandyings and Feuds; the great Men generally siding with the *Sadducees*, and the People with the *Pharisees*, as the same Author saith.

Sermon  
II.

Acts 23. 6.

(4.) Another point in Controversy among them was about the *Messias*. This was a Character much pretended to by several about the time of our Saviour; and was the chief Subject in dispute between Him and the Ruling-part of the *Jews*.

Points surely these were of great Importance, *viz.* Which is the True Church? What is the Rule of Faith? Whether there be a Future Life? And whether Jesus be the *Messias*? And Points these were that the whole Nation of the *Jews* was divided about: So that in all appearance there was scarcely ever a greater occasion for a determining Power to put this Case to an issue.

Now if there had been any such Infal-  
lible Authority, any such Concluding

†

Y

Power

~  
Sermon  
II.

Power Visible and Known; as it was then, if ever, necessary; so no doubt, there would have been Appeals to it in these Disputes among themselves, and with our Saviour: And in reason it may be thought our Saviour would readily have appeal'd to it, because the Judge being Infallible, could never have determined and given it against Him.

But we read of no such Appeals in Scripture; but on the contrary, our Saviour puts them upon another way of Enquiry; not to *Search* after a Living and Infallible Judge, by whom they were to be finally concluded; but to *Search the Scriptures*, as the Infallible Rule by which they were to be determined. And accordingly the Apostles advised their Auditors to the same course; that they  
 1 Theff. 5. 21. should thereby *prove all things*, and *hold fast* what upon trial they found to be good and true. That they should *not believe every Spirit*, every Pretender to Revelation and Infallibility, but should *try the Spirits whether they were of God*; and there was good reason it seems for it, because, saith the Apostle, *many false Prophets are gone out into the World*, 1 John 4. 1. that pleaded Inspiration and a Divine Mission and Authority for what they taught; as is manifest from the  
 Epistles

Epistles of the Apostles: And yet the Apostles (who themselves had the Spirit of Infallibility and Immediate Revelation) referr'd the *Jews* to the Written Word as the Rule, and to their own Reason and Conscience as the Judge.

Sermon II.  
2 Cor. 11.  
13.  
Tit. 1. 10.  
2 John 7.

If ever any might have required an implicit Faith, and an absolute and a blind Obedience to their judgment, it was Christ and his Apostles, and yet we find that they would have all Try and Examine, Weigh and Consider. It being an innate Privilege of Mankind, not to be led blindfold; but to be governed by their Reason, a privilege that true Religion doth evermore preserve, and what every Man is obliged to defend, since every Man must *give an account of himself to God*: And therefore the *Bereans* are commended by St. Paul, as *more generous and free-spirited, Who Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were true, which that Apostle taught, and compared one with another, his Doctrine with that Holy Standard; and finding them to accord, they received the word with all readiness of mind*. So manifest is it, that in the Apostolical times every Man was to judge for himself, and to use the same reason in

Rom. 14.  
12.  
Acts 17.  
11, &c.



Religion, which he used in the Common Sermon Affairs of Life.

II. All that those inspired Writers desired, was, That Men would *Search*, and search Impartially, and then they did not question but as they would be like the *Bereans* in Temper, so they would be alike prevailed with in the conclusion, and *receive* the truth with the like promptitude and *readiness of mind*; toward the finding out of which, Searching and Honesty go a great way.

And whereas it might have been thought, however, that the times would come when the Apostles should leave the World, and immediate Inspiration should cease with them, and so Men would be left to their own Fallible Judgment in the Interpretation of the Rule: Yet there is no other provision made by our Saviour and the Apostles for preventing any such Inconvenience (though they foresaw and foretold there would be Deceivers and Impostors); but all Future Ages were left in the very same Circumstances with the *Jews* in that Period of 450 years before spoken of.

Mat. 24.

24.

2 Tim. 4. 3.

2 Pet. 2. 1.

The Divine Writers supposing that there was in the Scriptures such a plain and full Revelation of all things necessary

ry

ry to be known in order to Salvation, and there would be so much Reason and Sense in Mankind (where so great an Interest as their Salvation was concerned) that with ordinary and common Helps, such as Prayer and Consideration, and Advice and appointed Teachers are, that they would be able to find out the Truth, or as much of it as was necessary to their Salvation, if they came to it with sincere and well disposed minds: And that God would never suffer such to want Ability, Opportunities and Means for it; or be wanting in Mercy to them, in forgiving and passing by such defects as were unavoidable to them in their Circumstances. But that belongs to the next Head; and that is,

3. The Direction, what to do in this Case, which is to Search, that is, with Diligence and Impartiality.

Supposing this, that every Man is to judge for himself, then persons will judge differently, and there will be Eternal and Endless Disputes. To this our Saviour fits an Answer, not only in the Direction given in the Text, but also in the subsequent part of his Discourse, which amounts to thus much; that we are to search with Diligence and Impartiality.

~~~~~  
 Sermon

II.

The former is implied in the Word *Search*, and which is very requisite in matters of such Importance as those were which our Saviour is here Discour-
 sing upon; and that is no less than his being the Messiah, the Son of God. A Subject that from the quality of it, and the various passages in Scripture relating to it, requir'd due Consideration. For though the Scriptures are so plain in most necessary points, that in the Prophet's
 Isa. 35. 8. Phrase, *the wayfaring men though fools shall not err therein*, and what are as soon understood as they are read: Yet there are even some of those that in the nature of the thing require a strict and careful attendance: Of which kind are such as contain the Characters of the Messiah; and therefore lye not so open to a superficial Eye, but that they may be misunderstood; and he that would then know and understand the force of the Argument referring to it, must *Search*. Our Saviour doth not therefore say only, That the Scriptures *Testify* of him, but requires them to *Search*, if they would be satisfied in it. For though proofs of this nature often are like Mines, that lie deep, yet upon Searching they are to be found: And if so, then our Ignorance is not to be imputed to their Obscurity, but

to our own Negligence, that we take not that course which is proper thereunto, and may very justly be requir'd.

Sermon
II.

But there is a farther Qualification requisite, and that is Sincerity and Impartiality.

Our Saviour here resolves the Infidelity of the *Jews* into Obstinacy and Insincerity. They had another Interest to mind, a Reputation to maintain, Ver. 40. *Ye will not come to me.* Ver. 42. *Ye have not the love of God in you.* Ver. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?*

These and the like *Vicious Inclinations* hinder from *Searching*, or from finding the truth if they *Search*, or from receiving it though they find it. Persons thus disposed will then *handle the word of God deceitfully*, and like artificial Orators put what Colour they please upon it. They will pervert and *wrest*, distort and writhe the Text, till they force it to serve the Cause they espouse, and are resolved beforehand to maintain.

2 Cor. 2.
17.
ch. 4. 2.
Eph. 4. 14.
2 Pet. 3.
16.

And so it would be, if there were an Infallible Judge, and so it was when there were Inspired Persons in the Church, when our Saviour himself was in the

Chair, and the Apostles were *helpers* of Sermon their Faith.

II.

So that there is no Fence in the World against Perverseness and Obstinacy, against Pride and Self-conceit, against Interest and Self-seeking.

Matth. 13.
15.

These things indeed will make the Scripture difficult, and Truth unintelligible, though ne'er so plain in it self, or never so evidently proved: When in the Phrase of Scripture, *Their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and they have closed their eyes, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart.* For then it is with such as with a sickly Stomach, that will nauseate the most wholesome and delightful Diet: In which Case it is not the fault of the Diet, but of the Stomach, which wants an Appetite, or of the Palate that wants the favour, which is the occasion of the disorder; and for remedy of which, the Body is to be cured, and the Stomach to be restored to its natural Tone and Temper; and then the same Diet will be nourishing and grateful as before.

So it is in the Case before us, where it is not the Understanding but the Will that is in the fault, or some pre-occupations

tions and Sinister Inclinations, that do cloud the Mind and keep it from judging, or dispose it by such fatal Biasses to judge amiss. Sermon II.

But now if the contrary Temper prevail, that Men *lay aside all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, all Prejudices and Interests, *and receive with meekness the ingrafted word*: If they are candid and ingenuous, free and impartial, and come with an hearty desire to know the truth, and with a stedfast resolution to be guided by it (whether it be for or against their worldly Interest), and to do according to what they know, they shall not finally and fundamentally mistake; according to our Saviour's resolution of this Case, *Job. 7. 17. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or, saith he, whether I speak of my self.* So again, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my Disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, John 8. 31, 32.* For God will not leave an honest Mind without such means as shall be sufficient for the understanding of all things necessary to Salvation. He Acts 8. 26.
that sent a *Philip* to an *Eunuch*, and an ch. 10. 3.
Angel to *Cornelius*, and called to a *Saul* ch. 9. 4.
out of Heaven, will present such occasions, give such assistance, or direct to such
Instructors,

Sermon

II.

Act. 18. 26.

Instructors, that shall, as *Aquila* to *Apolos*, expound unto them the way of God more perfectly.

Jam. 5. 17.
Acts 14.
15.

And if we put the Case, that a Person sincerely disposed to know and receive the Truth should fall into error (for Man is a fallible Creature), yet the Error shall not be Damnable, but what may be as consistent with his being a Christian and Orthodox, as Infirmities are with a good Man, and Sincerity. For as in the present State, which is a State of Infirmary, there is no arriving to such an established temper of Virtue and Goodness, but that *Elijah*, and *Paul*, and *Barnabas*, and the best of Men were subject to like passions with others: So neither is it possible by the utmost Diligence, and the most laborious Searching, to find out the Truth, so as never to mistake nor embrace Error for it (for that would as much be above the state of Nature thus to be infallible, as impeccable); nor is it necessary, when a Person may be saved with all tolerable Errors, as with natural and unavoidable Infirmities. And this then neither the Providence of God, nor the Promise of our Saviour are concerned to prevent: For these are like Diseases that belong to the quality of the State we are in; and are no more to be prevented,

prevented, than our Nature and our State are to be alter'd, and of imperfect to be made perfect. Sermos II.

But so far both the Promise, and the Providence of God, in confirmation of that promise, are concerned, that a Person of a truly sincere Mind, continuing such, shall no more fall into a damnable error without his own fault and choice, than be guilty of a damnable Sin; for that would be to leave him in a damnable condition, who upon the terms of the Gospel otherwise most certainly should be saved. For no Sin under that Dispensation damns, but what is wilful; according to that known Saying of St. *Austin*, *Nil ardet in Inferno nisi propria voluntas*.

Or however, if he should fall into such an error, as is against a fundamental Article, and for the quality of it, is damnable: Yet it shall not be damnable to him. It is a Case special, and what, though it falls not within the ordinary Rules of the Gospel shall however taste of the Mercy of it.

The Apostle speaks of *Damnable Heresies*; and we have those Truths which we call Fundamental, and both are rightly so termed; because those Truths are so essential to the Christian Faith, that it cannot

2 Pet. 2. 1.

cannot be the Christian Faith without
 Sermon them: And those Heresies are so destru-

II. ctive to the Christian Faith, that it cannot
 be the Christian Faith with them.

But yet because it is an error of invin-
 cible Ignorance, and what proceeds from
 a mere defect in the Understanding, and
 not in the Will, we may charitably con-
 Gal. 5. 19, ceive, that it being not that sort of He-
 20. refy, which is a *Work of the Flesh*, God
 will not impute it to such to their Con-
 demnation; and that their Piety towards
 God, and Charity towards Men, shall
 through Christ's Merits and Intercession
 do more to save them, than their involun-
 tary mistakes, how great soever, shall do
 to damn them: Since God requires ac-
 2 Cor. 8. cording to that a man hath, and not accord-
 12. ing to that he hath not.

But because for the most part the Er-
 ror is rather in the Will than in the Un-
 derstanding, or at least is then the more
 pernicious of the two: therefore as we
 should enquire after the truth, and be
 careful to receive it when it is proposed;
 so it is as necessary that we should receive
 2 Theff. 2. the truth in the love of it, and then it
 10. will have an influence upon us propor-
 tionable to the Consequence and Impor-
 tance of it.

And

And as they are the best, most useful and necessary Principles that most of all tend to make Men Good and Religious; so that is the best Testimony of our being in the right, and that our Principles are true, that we are thereby made more holy and pure, more just and charitable. I look upon this as an undoubted Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Revelation, that it most of all conduces to such an excellent End; and it will appear that he best understands it, that makes it the Rule of his Life as well as of his Faith; which if he doth, as he cannot likely mistake in his enquiry after Truth, so it's certain in the Issue he shall not miscarry. For then he that comes thus prepared to *Search the Scriptures*, will both find what they *testify* unto, and obtain that *Eternal Life*, which is therein revealed and promised.

There it is then that the matters of greatest Consequence are to be found, and all Points relating to them are resolved, such as do most nearly concern our eternal Happiness.

And if Scriptures do require our utmost Diligence and Care to find out their meaning, yet in the issue when found out, it will reward all our pains, though it be as great as the Affairs of this present

sent Life are not managed nor accomplished without.

II.

I do acknowledge the Church of Rome hath put this matter into a far more compendious course, if it were as true as it is short, by an Infallible Judge, who by an *Ipse dixit*, without giving any reason, stamps upon all the faith, an uncontrollable Authority; but that must be, if a Person is so near the Papal Chair, as to have the Infallible Ear to apply himself to, and immediately receives the dictates from the Infallible Oracle. For if he be remote from him, and receives all by Written Decrees, or the Oral Tradition of others, it issues then into a kind of Fallible Rule, and fails to be the Sentence of the Infallible Judge. For Words and Writings if they once fall into Fallible Hands, according to them, cease to be Infallible, and are as much subject to difficulties, and about the sense of which have often happen'd as endless Contentions and Misunderstandings, as ever they can pretend have happened to an Infallible Rule. Therefore they are no safer, nor less subject to err by the having an Infallible Judge, than we by an Infallible Rule: Nay, so much the worse is it with them, as we cannot suppose that an Infallible Judge (if we go to their Fountain-

tain-

tain-head) can more clearly interpret the Divine Rule, than God himself could and did direct and dictate to those who wrote it. So that at last they are left with all their Pretences to Infallibility, in a condition worse than those that have an infallible Rule for their Director; and that with their own Diligence and Searching, and the blessing of God concurring therewith, like *Apollos*, become mighty in the Scriptures, *Act. 18. 24*: For to such is that spoken which never was said to any Infallible Judge, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.*

 S E R M O N III.

ACTS XVII. 11, 12.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed.

THESE words are the Character of the *Bereans*, to whom *St. Paul* and *Silas* preached the Gospel, being drove from *Thessalonica*, a neighbouring City of *Macedonia*, by the Fury of the unbelieving *Jews*, that accused them of doing things contrary to the Decrees of *Cæsar*, and by this means set all that City in an uproar. But how hardly soever they were used there, they found a better

Treat-

Treatment from the *Bereans*, of whom St. Luke saith, *that they were more noble, more ingenuous, than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and Searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so, &c.* Sermon III.

In which words;

1. We are directed to the Rule, by which all Points of Faith are to be determined; and that is the Scriptures.

2. There is the Capacity all Persons are in to judge of that Rule; for the Words are spoken indifferently of the *Jews in Berea*, the Auditory, to whom St. Paul preached; that they *Searched*.

3. Here are the Qualifications of such as would judge aright, and they are Sincerity and Diligence: They were *more candid*, and they *Searched the Scriptures daily*.

4. There is the way and means which are to be used in the Interpretation of the Rule; and that is by comparing the Doctrine with Scriptures; there they *Searched, whether those things were so*.

5. There is the Success of this course, *Therefore many of them believed*.

I have already treated of the Three first of these in the foregoing Sermon, and have shewed the Scriptures to be the

~~~~~ Rule of Faith; that it is the privilege  
 Sermon of all to repair to that Rule for satisf-

III. faction; and that by Searching, they may  
 John 5. 39. arrive thereby to a Knowledge and Under-  
 standing of that Rule.

And I shall now proceed to the way of  
 Interpretation, and the consideration of  
 the course that is to be taken for the bet-  
 ter understanding of the Scriptures.

In discoursing upon which.

1. I shall premise some things with  
 reference both to the Perspicuity and Dif-  
 ficulties of Scripture; for it must be ac-  
 knowledged that the Sacred Books have  
 a mixture of both.

2. I shall lay down such Rules, as  
 may be of use for the better Interpreta-  
 tion of it.

As to the former I premise,

1. When we speak of the Scriptures,  
 we take it for granted, that the Transla-  
 tion of it, generally speaking, renders  
 the true sense of the Original; that is,  
 the Original and Translation are to him  
 that understands both, as it were but one  
 Book; and so again to him that under-  
 stands the Translation only, it is the same  
 as if he understood the Original.

And that this is so, is evident; be-  
 cause all Translations (though not Ex-  
 positions) of what Language, Church, or  
 Age



Age soever, do for the most part agree: And if a *Catena* or Draught were made of them, as there was of the ancient Versions, it would appear so to be, beyond all Contradiction.

Sermon  
III.

So that if any Stranger utterly unacquainted with the Christian Doctrine, or the Translations, but skill'd in those Languages, should compare them, he would be able to say that the Book was the same, and only differ'd in the Language; as the Ancient, *viz.* the Greek, and *Arabick*, and *Syriack*; or Modern, *viz.* *English*, *French*, *German*, or *Italian*, &c.

And let Men differ as they will in their particular Opinions, let them be *Jews*, as were the Translators of the *Septuagint*; Apostates, as was *Aquila*; *Marcionites*, as *Theodotion*; *Ebionites*, as *Symmachus*; yet unless in those points in which they industriously corrupt the Text to serve a Cause, and wilfully and apparently depart from the Original, there is a general consent among them in the main.

*V. Just. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. & Tertul. contr. Jud. c. 9.*

Which is a clear proof,

2. That the Scriptures were wrote so as to be understood; for else how could different Translators, unacquainted with the Language or Writings of each other, so exactly hit upon the same rendition of it?

~  
 Sermon  
 III.

And indeed it would be too bare-fac'd a Reflection upon Almighty God, by whose Direction and Inspiration the Scripture was wrote (as I have shewed) to suppose that such a Book thus proceeding from so Divine a Hand, and upon so noble a Design as the Revelation of God's Will to Man, should labour under such a defect as the compositions of Men of common Understanding are not guilty of.

Certainly it is as possible to Write so as to be understood, as it is to Speak and be understood; and since Writing is but a kind of Speech, Speech may as well be supposed unintelligible as Writing; and if it were so, both the pleasure and benefit of Conversation would be prevented and lost.

And what a presumption is it to deny that to God which we give to Men; and that when we grant that Men not only can, but do express their Thoughts plainly upon occasion by Writing, that God either has not that Power, or Will; but where he pretends to declare his Will to Mankind, he should, as God saith to *Job* 38. 2. *Darken counsel by words without knowledge*; and write so as not to be understood, which is to write to no purpose, but only to fill the  
 World

World with Contention, as if what is call'd Revelation were not to *send Peace*, but in the Letter of it, a *Sword of Strife* among Mankind?

Sermon  
III.

If we own God for the Author, we must say, that the Scriptures were wrote that they might be understood.

3. We may suppose farther, that at the time when the Scriptures were written, they were intelligible by those that were Cotemporaries with the Writers, and understood the Language they were Written in. Which was a great advantage they had above all After-Ages; for there is no Nation but what has peculiar Customs, to which Forms of Speech often relate; nor is there any Language which hath not Idiotisms and Phrases of their own; and therefore where these are not to be understood, or are not observed, the sense is lost or prejudiced, and perplexed, as I shall presently shew.

4. We may reasonably conclude, that what had no immediate reference to the Persons then in being, nor to the Ages, and Customs, and Proprieties then in use, but contained common matters, and was clothed in common Forms of Speech, was intelligible to others that did not live in those Ages, and generally as intelligible as to those that did. Such is



the Decalogue, which may be understood  
 Sermon by us in this Age as well as those that  
 III, were at Mount Sinai, at the first deliver-  
 ing of it.

5. The Scriptures being to continue to the World's end, and, generally speaking, being written for the use of all Men of all Ages and Nations, they must consequently be Intelligible in the main, and capable of being understood by all Persons in all times; or else they were written in vain: For to what purpose should they be preserved, or should they oblige Mankind to read them, if they were not to be understood?

6. I may say, that in Fact the Scriptures are plain in all things that are intended for the use of all, and that are necessary for all to know, in point of Faith or Practice.

Such are,

(1.) All the Principles of Natural Religion, such as the Being of a God, and his Creation of all Things; the Worship to be given to him, the Government of the World by Providence; the Immortality of the Soul, and a State of Rewards and Punishments in another Life.

These every one may understand as he reads them in Scripture, and which no Man can read, but he must find out and understand.

(2.) Such

(2.) Such is the History of Providence, that is, God's prospering the Good and punishing wicked Nations; his preserving a Church under all the Storms of the most violent Persecutions: His carrying on the train of Prophecies through all interruptions; and accomplishing them at the time, and after the manner long before prefixed.

Sermon  
III.

These are Matters of Fact, and what are obvious to all in the reading of them.

(3.) Such is matter of pure Revelation, and especially that which concerns the Redemption of Mankind by Jesus Christ. As to his Person, that he was before the Worlds, which were made by him: That *in the fulness of time*, according to the ancient Predictions, he became Man, and was made Flesh: That he wrought Miracles in Confirmation of his Mission from God, and of the Doctrine he Taught and Professed to receive from the Father: That he was Crucified and died as a Sacrifice for the Sins of all Mankind: That he rose again the Third Day from the Dead, and ascended into Heaven; That he sent down the Holy Spirit, and continues at the Right Hand of God to be our Mediator; and that we are with respect to that Mediation, to

~~~~~  
 Sermon
 III.

offer up all our Prayers in his Name to the Father: And that he is to come at the End of the World to Judgment, and shall raise the Dead, and summon them all before his Tribunal.

(4.) Of the like kind are all the Proofs and Confirmations of the Doctrine of our Saviour, before spoken of under another Character; such are Prophecies and Miracles. Prophecies, which though sometimes obscure in point of Phrase, yet there are those that are without difficulty; as that of *Josiah* and *Cyrus* by name, that of the place of our Saviour's Birth, the Stock and Lineage, the Tribe and Family he should proceed from; the time he should suffer in, &c.

And the other Attestation by Miracles is too evident to be insisted upon.

(5.) Of this sort are the terms of Salvation, among those things which are plainly set down in Scripture; we may find whatever relates to Faith and Manners: And in these two are comprehended all that is necessary to Salvation. So that whatever is not plainly set down in Scripture, or evidently inferr'd from it, is not necessary to Salvation, as *St. Austin* saith.

*Aug. de
 Doct. Christ.
 l. 2.*

Now I am apt to think, that no Person that comes unprejudiced, I mean not pre-

prepossess'd with contrary Principles, or corrupt Affections, but must needs own the Scripture to be clear in the Points before rehearsed, if so be he reads it with an ordinary Diligence and Care.

But will it be said, Are there not obscurities allowed to be in Scripture, and difficulties which are not to be surmounted? And what is a clearer proof of this, than the different Expositions we meet with, and the different Opinions Men espouse, and therefore espouse them because they conceive them to be the dictates of Holy Writ?

1. I answer; That is no Objection against it; for then there can be nothing certain, if the calling it in question will render it uncertain.

2. This indeed has been an Argument set up to overthrow the Authority of Scripture, and some have been so impertinent as to make use of the various Constructions and Significations of words, to serve this impious cause.

And so among other things, one quotes that saying of *Quintilian*, *There are innumerable kinds of words of ambiguous and various signification; so that it seemed to some of the Philosophers, that there was no word that doth not signify many things.*

*Philos.
Scripturæ
Interp. c. 3.
n. 16. &
n. 25. &
c. 4.*

But

~
 Sermon
 III.

But if this be a reason why the Scripture is obscure, and the Sense not attainable, then it is common with that to all Books whatsoever, not excepting even that Book which the Author thought so well of, as to publish for the information of the World.

If this were of any force, then it would be to no more purpose to speak than to write; because the words we use are capable of different senses, as well as what we write.

This is a way of arguing that proves too much, and goes too far, and serves no more than an Argument that falls short, and comes not up to the Case in hand.

This would make the Divine Oracles like those of the Devil, to be no other than *Enigma's* and Riddles, as if, in the New-coined phrase of the Members of the *Romish* Church, they were but the *various figures of Ink upon a Book*: Or served to no other use than white Paper, to write what you will upon, and make what Sence out of it that a fruitful Brain can invent.

3. Though there are obscurities in Scripture, it falls upon such Points as are not in themselves necessary, and not necessary to all; and notwithstanding which,

Of the Perspicuity of Scripture. 347

which, a Person may be saved though he dye ignorant of them, or of the Sence of those Scriptures which contain them. For there is no greater sign of their not being necessary, than that they are not what we can understand, or are not plainly to be found in Scripture. Sermon III.

4. Though there are obscurities in Scripture, yet they are nothing in comparison to the plain Texts of it; and which no more hinder us from understanding the plain, than the Spots in the Sun prevent us of the Light of it.

The obscurities are like the various Readings, of little consequence, and importance, (as I have shewed) and nothing comparable to what remains intire and perspicuous. They are only *some things* that are hard to be understood. Sermon Fourth and Sixth of the last Year. 2 Pet. 3. 16.

But how many are the plain and intelligible, and especially of things necessary to Salvation?

5. When, I say, there are obscurities in Scripture, and that they fall upon less necessary Points, I grant that even those obscure parts are not without their use; it being here, as in the Heavens, where the cloudy Stars that scatter a faintish light through the Galaxy or Milk-way, though not discernable but by a Telescope; yet (if we may judge of what we do

do not know of Nature, by what we do).
 Sermon have their use, and by their Influences,

III. without doubt, serve a noble Design. So though the obscure Texts of Scripture afford a dim light in comparison, and what we can at present give but a slender account of; yet we our selves have sometimes perceived, when we have come by searching to understand any of them that we understood not before, that they prove of very great advantage; as they serve to confirm the plain, and do give light to those that were otherwise, and were it not for the light given by these, would have remained, obscure.

And indeed, Almighty God has so wisely ordered it, that as there are some Works in Nature we do understand, and some we do not; some serve a lesser, and some a greater end: So has he also *temper'd* the body of Scripture together, the difficult with the easy, the obscure with the plain, the less necessary with the greater, that our Industry may be excited by our endeavour to understand them; and our labour be rewarded by the understanding of them: That we may *Search* as the *Bereans* here did, and upon our Searching, may, as they, come to *believe* and understand, or be confirmed in our belief of them.

Toward

Toward the better understanding of which, 2. I shall direct to some Rules *Sermon* that may be of singular use to us in our *III.* Search and Inquiry.

1. Where in the first place it is advisable, that we be very conversant in the Sacred Text; and as the *Bereans*, *search it daily*; by which means much of the obscurity will wear off; and the Phrase, and Style, and way of arguing will be more evident, and the matter of it make not only the stronger impression on our Minds, but be clear'd up also insensibly to us. We see how much difficulties are lessened by practice, as it is in learning the Alphabet, and the first Principles of any Language or Science; and when we in the beginning struggled with our selves, and used a kind of force to bend our Minds to it, by degrees the difficulties abated, and we became complete Masters of the Matter that lay before us. So it is in reading the Scriptures, where by use we are wonderfully let into the meaning of them. For this reason it was that the Prophets were read in the Synagogue every Sabbath-day, as is implied, *Acts* 13. 27: And why also the Scriptures were read as well when not understood, as when they were; according to the practice

~ Office of the Eunuch. For to what purpose would it have been for him when

III. alone, without an Interpreter, to have
 Acts 8. 30, read *Isaias* the Prophet upon such an obscure Argument, if by reading it he might not have been some help to himself, and by degrees have attained to a farther understanding of it more or less?

And I dare appeal to any that have taken this course, and have daily read the Scriptures, and read them with the like impartiality as other Books, and much more where they have read them with the reverence and attention due to Divine Oracles, whether they have not found the difficulties lessen upon their hands. And if such as daily read those Books with these and the like Qualifications, would but account with themselves for all the difficulties assoyl'd and solv'd this way, without any other assistance, it would be no unpleasant or unprofitable reflection.

2. Although it be of this advantage to read the Scriptures in course, as was usual in publick in the Synagogues, and in private among Persons piously disposed: Yet it would add much to the rendering the abstruser parts more easy and intelligible, if they began with the plainest, either for Duty or Matter, and then proceed-

proceeded to the more obscure. For this is a reducing things into a strict and natural Method, and is like the beginning with the beginning of a Book wrote in that way, and so gradually proceeding as we are led along from Point to Point, from Proposition to Proposition, till we come to the end of that, and the difficulties together.

The Scripture I own is far from being wrote after this humane and artificial Method, but in a way Extraordinary and Divine; and is among other reasons, composed after the manner in which it is, that we may be obliged to use a besitting Industry in searching into the meaning of it; and 'tis certainly one part of that industry so to order it, that as there is this difference plainly to be observed in Scripture, so we would thus make an advantage of it by beginning with *Words and Things easy to be understood*, before we attempt to understand what is in a Sphere for the present above our Capacity; for *such have need of milk, and not of strong meat,* ^{Heb. 5. 12,} ^{14.} *—which belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil;* and I will add, between things plain

~
Sermon
III.

plain and abstruse, more necessary and less, certain and doubtful.

3. Another Rule for the understanding of Scripture, is to be well acquainted with the principal design, and the chief Subject of it, whether as to Faith or Practice: For from thence doth arise what is usually called the *Analogy of Faith*; and which will be a Standard upon all occasions to have recourse to. For what Sense is to things sensible, and Reason to things merely reasonable, that is the Analogy of Faith to all Interpretations, and according to whose Arbitration they must stand and fall: Of this the Apostle gives an Instance as to Faith, 1 *John* 4. 2, 3. *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; every Spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the Flesh, is of God. And every Spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.*

And if there should be any place of Scripture that such Hereticks would produce in their favour, we may peremptorily conclude, that the meaning they would force upon it, is no more the meaning of that Scripture, than that can be the Spirit of God, *which confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.*

4. For the better understanding of Scripture, it is a proper way to compare Scripture with Scripture, the Old Testament with the New, the obscure with the plain. For that which is obscure and difficult in one place, is usually explained and made clear in another, as St. *Austin*, in the Book before quoted, observes.

Sermon
III.

Toward the more useful Application of this Rule, it may be convenient to enquire from whence Difficulties and Obscurities in Scripture do arise; Whether from the Sublimity of the Matter; the Proprieties of Language; the Relation that one thing has to another, as Types; the Modes and Forms of Speech in Matters Prophetical or Figurative; which we may be helped in by this way of comparison.

When I have just before said, That *there is no greater sign of the matter's being unnecessary, than when it is what we cannot understand, or is not plainly to be found in Scripture*: I mean thereby, not the matter or thing spoken of, but the Proposition: For the Proposition may be a plain and a very intelligible Proposition, when the matter of it is inexplicable, and above our Understanding. As the Proposition, *God is a Spirit*,

A a

rit,

 rit, is a plain Proposition, and as easy to
 Sermon be understood in respect of its Sence
 III. and Meaning, as that a Triangle is a
 Figure consisting of Three Angles; but
 the Matter is vastly different; for who
 can tell what a Spirit is, or can give as
 adequate a Definition of it, as he can of
 a Triangle? And yet the Proposition be-
 fore-recited, of God's being a Spirit, is
 as plain to be understood, and as neces-
 sary to be believed; as if it were in its
 Nature plain, and Intelligible, and that
 we as perfectly knew what a Spirit is, as
 we know what a Triangle is: And there-
 fore the obscurities arising from such
 Sublimity of the Matter, are not to be
 brought here to account; for they can
 never be made plainer to us than they
 are, till our Understandings are Ele-
 vated and raised up to them. 'Tis a
 Spirit alone that can tell what a Spirit
 is, and 'tis God only knows himself.
 And though now we have it as plainly
 Revealed, that *God is a Spirit*, as that
 God is; yet we must be contented nei-
 ther to have an adequate Notion of God,
 unless we were as God, nor also the like
 Notion of a Spirit, till we become Spi-
 rits our selves.

When I say again, That it is a sign
 of the *Matter's being unnecessary*, that
 it

it is not plainly to be found in Scripture; thereby is meant what is plain to such Sermon III.
as Search, Enquire and Compare, and know how to argue from it: And if by Search and Enquiry, by comparing and arguing, it comes to be plain, I may as well so call it, as if it was in so many words therein expressed.

There is a very convincing Argument of a Future State in the Scripture quoted by our Saviour, when God saith, *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* from whence Matth. 22. our Saviour with great strength infers, ^{32.}
God is not the God of the Dead but of the Living; and so those that he is the God of, are alive. But though the force of the Argument is now very evident, by the light our Saviour gives to it, yet I believe few would have observed it without that Direction, or to be sure without taking that Method of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

For it is by that Rule,

(1.) We come to understand the Idiotisms and Proprieties of the Language in which the Scripture was written; and without attending to which, we shall fall very much short of attaining to the sense of it. These Idiotisms are common, with the Hebrew, to all Languages, and so are no otherwise to be understood,

derstood, than by a strict Observation of Sermon them.

III.

As for Example, Without this Key, how irreconcilable would it be to other Texts, to have it said, *God would have mercy and not sacrifice*; and that our Saviour should require his Disciples, *not to labour for that meat which perisheth*; and that the Apostle should forbid Women the adorning themselves with the outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and wearing of Gold, or of putting on of apparel? All of which were notwithstanding allow'd, and some requir'd elsewhere. But now if we attend to the Genius of the Hebrew, and compare one Scripture with the other, we shall find, that the Jews having no degrees of comparison, were wont to express comparisons by *Antitheses* or *Negatives*; and then the fence of the Negative *Not*, is *not so much*; as *labour not*, that is, *not so much for the meat that perisheth, as for that which endureth to everlasting life, &c.* And if this be observed, we shall find there is no contradiction, when in one place *Sacrifices* are requir'd, and in another, that *God would have mercy and not sacrifice*; when in one place, it is commanded to *work with their own hands*; and in another, *labour not for the meat that perisheth, &c.* (2.) By

Hosea 6. 6.

Mat. 9. 13.

John 6. 27.

1 Pet. 3. 3.

1 Theff. 4.

11.

(2.) By this way of comparison we come to understand the figurative Phra-
seology or manner of Expression in Scrip-
ture, and we shall find that such are not
to be understood in a proper and literal,
but allusive sence.

Sermon
III.

As for instance; God is in Scripture
said to have Eyes and Hands, Ears and
Bowels, which are terms belonging to a
Natural and Human Body: And also to
Laugh, and to be Angry, and to Repent,
which are passions belonging to Mankind.
And yet we read also, that *God is a spi-
rit*, and so hath not a Body, nor any of
the parts belonging to it: And that he is
not as Man that he should repent; and
neither is nor can be subject to those In-
firmities and Passions which belong to
us. And therefore when such Bodily or
Mental Affections and Properties are im-
puted in words to him, it is in a figura-
tive and improper sence, and which are
spoken of him after the manner of Men,
and in condescension to our Infirmary,
who are not able to conceive of him as,
and according to what he is in himself.
So that it would be a gross piece of folly,
for the sake of such figurative Expressi-
ons (as *Theodoret* saith of *Audæus*) to
conceive of God as a Corporeal Being;
which is to say, he is not a Spirit, and

Heret. Fa-
bul. l. 4.

so to make the Scripture inconsistent. Sermon with it self.

III.

Another instance of this kind, is the Assertion of our Saviour, *This is my Body*; which being a Sacramental as well as Figurative Phrase of Speech, recourse must be had to the like Institutions in Scripture, and to what has the nearest resemblance to it; and that is the Passover, the *Jewish* Sacrament, and, as I may so say, their Lord's Supper. Now when we read in the Law, of the *Lord's Passover*, and that they *roasted and eat the Passover*, we easily conceive that by it they meant not the Angel's passing over the Houses of the Children of *Israel* (which gave occasion to the Phrase); but the Lamb, which was the Memorial and the Representation of it. So when in Correspondence hereto, we read of our Saviour, that at the Institution of the Lord's Supper, he said of the Bread, *This is my Body*; and that he broke the Bread, and they eat of it; we can reasonably no more understand that his natural Body was then actually broken, and that they did eat his very Body, than we can understand, that when the *Jews* roasted and eat the Passover, they roasted and eat the Angel that passed over the Houses where the Blood was sprinkled. And therefore what was improperly

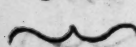
improperly and figuratively spoken of one, was after the same manner spoken of the other, and alike to be understood. III.

Indeed such Figures and Modes of Speech, are as soon understood, for the most part, as plain and literal Propositions.

As when our Saviour is called a *Lamb*, a *Door*, a *Shepherd*, a *Vine*, he was no more really such, nor are such Phrases any more literally to be understood, than that *Herod* was a *Fox*, and the Pharisees *Vipers*, because they were so called by our Saviour: And therefore as our Saviour's Auditors as soon understood him, when he spoke after this Figurative, as if in the plainest and literal Phrase of it; so one would think they should, and we may be as certain they did understand our Saviour, when he said, *This is my Body*, not of a proper human Body, but only by way of Representation, according to the nature of the thing, and those places to which this had an immediate reference.

(3.) By this way of comparison we come to understand the Typical Phrase of Scripture; which of it self is, like the Types, obscure.

There is a great Conformity between the Old Testament and the New, and

 especially as to what is the main Subject
 Sermon of the Mosaical Law, the Types, Cere-
 monies, and Rites of it: And where
 III. there is this Correspondence and Confor-
 mity, we must for the understanding of
 the one, borrow light from the other.
 And therefore when the like Forms of
 Speech are us'd in the New Testament,
 as are in the Old, it is to be supposed
 that we are well acquainted with the
 Old, or that we must have recourse to
 that for the understanding of the New:
 Of this the Epistle to the *Hebrews* is an
 Instance, the Phraseology of which is
 mostly Legal and Ritual; and so we must
 be acquainted with those Rites, or the
 Modes of speaking, to understand it. I
 shall here content my self with a particu-
 lar or two of this sort. It is a known
 case, and very usual in the Old Testa-
 ment, in the Levitical or Prophetical part
 of it, to call a *Sin-offering* by the name
Sin, or in the Translation of the Septua-
 gint, *for Sin*.

תִּשְׁלֹחַ
 Lev. 4. 3, 8.
 Isa. 53. 10.
 ועל אִשָּׁת-
 תִּשָּׂא.

Now this is an Elliptical way of Expres-
 sion, very customary in those and other
 Languages; but what is customary and sig-
 nificant in one, yet if literally Translated
 into another, oft-times looks absurdly;
 and so it is necessary in such a Transla-
 tion to supply it by what was before un-
 derstood,

derstood, but not expressed; as it is in the Cases abovesaid. Thus for instance, Sermon *Heb. 9. 28.* 'Tis said our Saviour Christ was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many; and unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time without Sin unto Salvation. But thus he appear'd the first time, he was then without Sin; and therefore here according to the Subject the Apostle is discoursing upon, it is to be supplied after this manner, *without a Sin-offering.* So it is, *Heb. 10. 8.* and *2 Cor. 5. 21.* So we have it according to the latter Phrase of the Septuagint, *Rom. 8. 3.* God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for Sin condemned Sin in the flesh. For Sin, is a Phrase rough and abrupt; but if we add to it by a Sacrifice for Sin, it is very agreeable and intelligible. *ὡς ἀμαρτίας.*

Now when there is this Mystical Relation, and the Gospel has a respect in its Phrase and manner of speaking, to the Types and Ceremonies of the Law, the Antitype is to be explained by the Type, the New by the Old.

(4.) By this way of comparison, we become acquainted with the Prophetical way of Writing, and may understand what without it would be obscure.

I have

~
Sermon
III.

I have just before observed the Relation that is between the Law and the Gospel; and that if we would understand the Gospel, it is fit to repair to the Law, as to the Phrase of it; and if we would understand the Law in its noblest sense, we must repair to the Gospel. And from this Relation between these Two is it, that the Prophecies of Scripture, especially as to the Future State of the Church under the Gospel, are clothed in the Phrase of the Mosaical Institutions and Rites. Thus the Success of the Gospel, and the Enlargement of the Christian Church, is described under such Characters. *Isai. 2. 2, 3. It shall come to pass in the last days, that the Mountain of the Lord's House shall be established in the top of the Mountains, and all Nations shall flow unto it. Isai. 66. 23. It shall come to pass from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to Worship before me at Jerusalem, v. 20. which, and the like Phrases were no more literally to be fulfilled, than that we shall eat Bread in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

But now as the Happiness of the Future State is often described by such Phrases as belong to this present state, and not to that which they are literally applied

applied to : So the Prophecies concerning the state of the Church under the Gospel, are frequently exemplified under such Resemblances and Forms of Speech as suited the People of the *Jews*, for whose immediate use they were wrote ; and notwithstanding which, neither they nor others could possibly be led into such a mistake, as to think that such should the Kingdom of the *Messias* be, as those Expressions verbally signified ; when it was evident from the Prophecies of Scripture, that that Legal State was to be abolished, and also that several of the things in the nature of them were unpracticable. As for example ; when it was said, that *from one New-moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another*, that is, Monthly and Weekly, all Nations should come up to Worship the Lord at *Jerusalem*.

And therefore in the Explication of such Phrases, we must not consider what they exactly signify in their first and original use, but to what purpose they serve and are applied ; and if so we do, we shall lightly as soon understand the *New heaven and the New earth*, which *St. Peter* speaks of, *2 Pet. 3. 13.* as *the Heaven and the Earth* in the First Chapter of *Genesis* : And as well shall we understand

~
 Sermon
 III.

derstand *Babylon* and *Euphrates* in the Mystical sence of the *Apocalypse*, as we do in the Historical Books of Scripture.

But above all, there is nothing doth so lay open the Secrets and Mysteries of Prophecy, as the Event; for by that means, when it is fulfilled, it is as clear as if it had been Historically related. And as if we look back from the Event to the Prediction, we the better understand that Prediction, which without the Knowledge and Observation of the Event we could not perhaps have understood: So by comparing what yet remains to be fulfilled, with what has been already fulfilled, we have a useful Key for the understanding of the one by the other; the obscure by the plain, and what we do not know the meaning of, by what we do.

Thus, for instance, we may understand the Prophetical Schemes of Speech, concerning the destruction of a Nation, by comparing one of the Testaments with the other; or what is to be fulfilled with what has been fulfilled. So when in the Old Testament we find it Prophetically threatned of *Babylon*, *Idumea*, *Egypt*, &c. that the *Stars of Heaven*, and the *Constellations thereof shall not give their light* — that all the *Host of Heaven* shall

Mai. 13. 10.
 34. 4.
 Ezek. 32.
 7, 8.

shall be dissolved, and fall down as the *Leaf of a Vine* — And when that we read *Sermon III.*
in *Daniel*, the little Horn cast down some
of the Host and of the Stars to the ground, *Dan. 8. 10.*

and stamped upon them: We have a Key
to unlock the Mysteries Expressions of
the same kind in the New Testament.
As when 'tis said (if it be to be under-
stood of the destruction of *Judea*) that
the Sun shall be darkened, and the Moon *Matt. 24.*
shall not give her light, and the Stars shall *29.*

fall from Heaven; and that a third part
of the Sun, Moon, and Stars shall be *Revel. 8.*
darkened, &c. it is to be understood after *12.*

the same manner as the other. Now by
a reflection upon the state of those Nati-
ons abovesaid, as well as the nature of
the thing, we find all intended in those
Mystical Expressions was, That these
Nations should be utterly destroyed, and
all Orders and Degrees of Men (repre- *Gen. 37. 9.*
sented by the Sun, Moon and Stars)
should be dissolved: And therefore ac-
cordingly are we in the Prophetical pas-
sages in the New Testament, to under-
stand those Phrases and Forms of Speech
the like way.

It would be endless to prosecute this
Argument as far as it will bear; for then *Regulae
Intelligendi
Scripturas
Sacras.
Par. 1550.*
I might go through the 134 Rules of
Franciscus Ruizius; but what I have here
laid


~~~~~ laid down is sufficient to help and direct  
**Sermon** us, generally speaking, in the Interpretation of such Forms of Speech, which  
**III.** often render the sense of Scripture difficult. But God be thanked, there is little of this in comparison of what is plain and easy, and in which the main of a Christian's Duty is concerned. This the experience of every one that is at all conversant in those sacred Books, will confirm, to the silencing of all Cavils, which some Men of Wit, and others of Design, may pretend to the contrary.

For I dare confidently say, That no one can plead ignorance against his Duty, or that he failed in it, because the sacred Pages are not to be understood. What! will such dare to refer their cause to the Judgment-day, and be willing to be determined to Life or Death, to Salvation or Damnation, as they can make this good? Will they put Eternity upon this issue, and insist upon it, That they could not know what they were to believe or do, because the Scriptures that should have informed and directed them, were obscure, uncertain, and unintelligible? If they will not offer this by way of relief or mitigation, then 'tis plain that all the cry of Obscurities, and Difficulties, and Uncertainties, are but  
† pitiful

pitiful shifts, and sorry pretences. There are plain places and Books enough and enough, to silence all such presumptuous and arrogant Cavillers. Sermon III.

If we will believe our own Eyes, and credit our own Understandings, the Scripture is plain in all that is necessary for us to know; and if we do according to what that teaches, and we may learn from it, we shall never be wanting in all necessary qualifications for that Everlasting happiness which is therein revealed, for the promoting of which it was written. *Which God grant to us all through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

---

SER-

## SERMON IV.

LUKE XVI. 31.

*And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead.*

*Irenæus,  
Origen,  
Cyril,  
Hierom,  
think  
it not a  
Parable.*

FROM the 19th. Verse of this Chapter to the end, under the Parable (if I may so call it) of the Rich Man and *Lazarus*, there is a way proposed, by which we may best judge of the wisdom and folly, the happiness and misery of Mankind. And it is as if our Saviour had said; Suppose we a Man as happy as the World can make him, abounding in Prosperity, Wealth, Ease and Luxury, that wanted nothing for his Vanity, for he was in a condition honourable and splendid, *was cloathed in Purple, and fine Linen*, and Silk; nothing for his  

†

Appetite,



*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 369

Appetite, for he *fared sumptuously every day*. And when he died, was *buried* Sermon with Ceremony and Pomp agreeable to **IV.** his Quality.

Suppose we on the other hand a Person as miserable as this World can make him, poor so as to *beg*; full of Sores and Ulcers, so as not able to help himself; destitute of Friends, so as to be *cast at the Rich Man's gate*; hunger-starved so as to need *the very crumbs which fell from the other's table*; contemned so as not to be regarded though lying at the *gate*, in the passage and view of all; or if taken notice of, yet so as not to be relieved; naked, so as not to have wherewith to cover his Body, or to defend his sores from the cold, and that found more pity among the *dogs* than Men, while alive (for they *came and licked his sores*); and when dead through want, pain and anguish, found as little charity to bury him. Thus far we find them as unlike as can be in their present condition.

But now let us follow them beyond the Grave, and see what becomes of them in the other World. There we find the poor *Lazarus*, that once pitiful, contemptible, necessitous wretched Creature, that wanted what the *Dogs* had here, the *crumbs of the Table*, taken care of at Mat. 19.

# 370 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

his death by the Holy Angels, and carried by them into a place of safety and rest, comfort and happiness, where *Abraham* was, and there preferred to a place of honour and kindness; for he lay in *Abraham's Bosom*, having no poverty, nor sores, nor contempt, nor any of the *evil things* he received in his Life time here.

This he had because of his afflictions that he endured, and bore with admirable patience; because of his steady dependance upon God, and an humble submission to him in the most deplorable condition.

On the other hand, the Rich Man when he died went to Hell, where he had none of the Ease and Luxury, the Respect and Honour, none of the good things he received in his life-time, but was *tormented in a flame*, wanting water there as much to *cool his tongue*, and quench his insatiable thirst, as *Lazarus* did before the *crumbs which fell from his Table* to satisfy his hunger. There he was, and there he was to abide, for there was a *great Gulph fixed*, that rendered him as incapable of receiving relief in the other World, as he was neglectful and unwilling to give it to such as needed in this.

This he had for his Pride and Unmercifulness,

*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 371

cifulness, for his Contempt of God, and of others better than himself. This he was too late sensible of as to himself; *he lift up his eyes*, but he was *in torments*; he cried to his *Father Abraham*, but he proves inexorable; he calls for mercy, but is minded of his former ingratitude to God, and his uncharitableness to others, and is put to silence with a *Son remember, that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things*, ver. 25. Sermon IV.

When he could not prevail for himself, he then turns his thoughts towards his *Five brethren*, whom he left behind, that were as careless, and so likely at last to be as miserable as himself, and intreats *Abraham* that *Lazarus* might be sent to testify unto them, how it was with him, and how it would also be with them unless they repented, ver. 27. To which *Abraham* replies, ver. 29. *They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.* But that doth not satisfy him, and he urges farther: *Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went from the dead, they will repent*, ver. 30. This he speaks from his own Experience, who had *Moses and the Prophets* as well as they, and yet he was as secure and careless, as if he had never heard or knew what they Taught; and therefore unless some other Expedient



# 372 The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.

~  
Sermon  
IV.

be thought of, or some other means used, they are like in the conclusion to be as miserable as himself; and surely that, if any, would prevent it, *if one went from the dead.* But to this *Abraham* replies in the Text, *If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead;* that is, if they give no Credit nor regard to what is contained in their Writings concerning a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, they are incurable, *neither will they be persuaded to repent, (as it is ver. 30.) though one rose from the dead.*

That there is a Future State of Happiness or Misery, in which the Souls of Men do live after a separation from their Bodies, has been in all Ages universally received: But yet was not so convincingly to be proved from the sole light of *Reason*, but that a fuller evidence of it was very desirable: For which there are but two ways, Either that of Divine Revelation, by persons Divinely Inspired; Or by the return of one from the Dead, who was before known to the Living. And these are the ways taken here into consideration by our Saviour, in the case before us: Where there may be three sorts of persons concern'd.

†

1. Those

## The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 373

1. Those that had not *Moses* and the Prophets, and were wholly without a Sermon Revelation; as was the case of the Heathens: And *how shall they believe, who have not heard?* Rom. 10. 14. IV.

2. Those that had *Moses* and the Prophets, and yet were incredulous, and did not believe what *Moses* and the Prophets relate concerning a Future State. Such were the *Sadducees*, who held there was no resurrection, angel, nor spirit existing out of a Body. Matt. 22. 23. Acts 23. 8.

3. Those that had *Moses* and the Prophets, and did believe what was therein revealed, concerning the Soul's Immortality and a Future Life, but were not thereby persuaded to repent. Such were the *Pharisees*, who professed to believe what the *Sadducees* denied: And of this sort were the Rich Man (here spoken of) and his Five Brethren supposed to be.

Now toward the conviction of each of these, it might be supposed, that if one rose from the dead, the former would be persuaded to believe, and the latter to repent.

Thus the Heathens reasoned, who had no Revelation. As that Excellent person *Canus Julius* (that *Seneca* speaks of) who just before his Execution said to

## 374 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

\* Vos quæritis an Immortales animæ sint. Ego jam sciam.

† Si quid Explorasset, circumitûrum amicos, & indicaturum, qui esset animarum status. De Tranquil. c. 14.

his Friends, \* *Ye are inquisitive to know whether the Souls are Immortal; I shall now know.* And he promised, † *If he found it so, that he would go about among his Friends, and would inform*

*them what was the state of departed Souls.*

And the same *Seneca*, when discoursing to *Lucilius* about the behaviour of *Bassus Aufidius*, how dying he spake of Death as a Friend, and what a confirmation this gave to the Doctrine of the Souls Immortality, he adds,

\* Plus ut puto haberet fidei apud te, si quis revixisset, & in morte nihil mali esse narraret Expertus. Epist. 30.

\* *But I suppose you would more firmly believe it, if one should return to life again, and should declare that he found no evil in death.* To

this they gladly repaired as an evidence where they found it, And therefore *Plato* produceth the instance of *Erus Armenius*, that after he had been dead Twelve days, revived, and gave much such an account of the other State, as we have in this Parable.

*De Rep.*  
l. 10.

But 'tis the case of Revelation we Christians are more immediately concerned in, and which our Saviour here speaks to, and prefers before the Testimony of one rising from the dead.

The way here proposed concerning the coming



*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 375

~~~~~  
Sermon
IV.

coming of one from the dead, has somewhat of common Experience on its side. For we see that notwithstanding the clear Revelation of another state in Scripture, and the belief that Men have of it, yet generally they are but little affected with these Arguments, though allowed to be of the greatest Importance, because they lie dead in a Book, and are proposed to them by such as have no more personal Experience of these things than themselves, having never been out of this world, nor had any sight of, or conversation with the other.

But now if a special Messenger should be sent from the other world; a *Lazarus* who was known to them when alive, and known by them to be dead; one that had been an ocular Witness of the things he spoke of and related, and should tell them, that as there is a state of Happiness for good Men, so a state of Misery for the wicked, a state of Misery without ease, respite, or hope of deliverance, and confirmed all by his appearance, surely this would move them: Surely no heart so hard, but this must penetrate; no mind so stupid, but this must awaken; no Sinner so incorrigible, but this must reclaim. And it may be left to every one to judge, Whether if there were

376 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

*Such an Apparition that should come up-
on this terrible Errand, any one could
see and hear it with the same calmness
and indifference, as he hears a Sermon,
or reads a Chapter in the Bible upon this
serious Argument.*

Sermon
IV.

*So that the advantage seems to be
much on the side of the Apparition; and
the Proposal here made, agreeable to the
Common sense of Mankind.*

*But how probable a course soever this
seems to be, yet our Saviour here deter-
mines on the contrary, If they hear not
Moses and the Prophets, neither, &c.
Which Answer may be resolved into these
Two parts.*

*1. That the Arguments contained in
Scriptures, are sufficient to perswade Men
to repent.*

*2. When Men disregard the Holy
Scriptures, (the ordinary means of Sal-
vation) so as not to be perswaded to re-
pent by the Arguments therein contain-
ed, they will not be perswaded by means
extraordinary, and though, for example,
one should rise from the dead.*

*The first of these, (viz. That the Argu-
ments contained, &c.) is supposed, ver. 29.*

*when Abraham saith, they have Moses
' the Prophets, let them hear them: And
the other doth not deny.*

*any
this*

Now

The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 377

Now the chief Arguments relating to this Subject are briefly touched upon in Sermon this Parable ; which are these : IV.

1. That the Souls of Men are Immortal. This is implied when the Rich Man and *Lazarus* are said to be in Being after they were dead, *ver. 22.*

2. That the State into which the Souls of Men are disposed after death, is a State of Recompence, *Abraham* saith, *ver. 25. He is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

3. That that State of Recompence is a State of unchangeable Happiness to some, and of endless Misery to others, *ver. 26. Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you [to relieve you], cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence [for relief.]*

4. That Men are disposed to Happiness or Misery there, according to their behaviour in this World, *ver. 25. saith Abraham, Son, remember, that thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

These are Considerations of such force and consequence, that this miserable Person desires not that *Lazarus* should be sent

378 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~~~~~  
 Sermon sent to argue upon them with his Five  
 Brethren, but to *testify* concerning their  
 IV. reality.

Arguments they are of such force, that he that will not by these be perswaded to repent, will never be perswaded by any other. But though this be all granted to be true (as it's supposed), yet in his Opinion, as the Case would admit farther evidence, so it seemed to need it; and therefore if this extraordinary course were taken of sending one from the dead, *they would* (in his Opinion) certainly *repent*, who with the ordinary means continue impenitent.

This brings to the second General.

2. When Men disregard the ordinary means of Salvation, and are not to be perswaded to repent by the Arguments revealed in holy Scripture, they will not be perswaded by means extraordinary, and though one should come from the dead to perswade them.

For the resolving of which Point, we are to consider what are the Reasons why the ordinary means of Salvation, such as the holy Scriptures are, prove ineffectual; which cannot be from the want of proper and forcible Arguments; for what ever one from the dead can say to move or perswade, is as plainly deliver'd in  
 Scripture.

Scripture. He cannot more expressly tell them that there is a God, that the Souls of Men are Immortal, that there is a Heaven and a Hell, than the Scripture doth: And therefore if what is thus revealed, and believed upon such Revelation, should not prove as effectual, as what is reported by a special Messenger from the dead; it must be from some Reasons which belong to the one, and not to the other; but that there is no ground for; and therefore from whence can this proceed, but from the excessive love to the things of this Life, and the indulgence Men give to themselves in the enjoyments of it? Whence should this proceed, but from the power of those Lusts and vicious Habits they have contracted?

And where these and the like causes are, a Messenger from the other World will make no stronger an impression, nor will an impression thereby made, be of any longer continuance, than in the other Case: But that he that will not be persuaded by *Moses* and the Prophets, will not be persuaded though one come from the dead.

And this I shall make good,

1. By parallel and futable Cases and Instances,

2. By

380 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~~~~~  
 Sermon 2. By a particular inquiry into the
 IV. causes of Impenitence, which will hold
 in one case as well as the other.

1. By parallel cases.

As,

(1.) If means as extraordinary, and more extraordinary than the coming of one from the dead, have failed in this point, and not perswaded Men to Repentance, we have as little reason to expect, nor can it reasonably be presumed, that the coming of one from the Dead, should perswade and become effectual.

As for instance; Let us consider the Case of *Pharaoh*, before whom such stupendious Miracles were wrought, and upon whom such astonishing Judgments were inflicted, as could not in reason be supposed resistible: When the Waters, Earth, and Air, Beasts, Fishes, and Fruits of the Earth, Men and Children, either felt or were made the instruments of Divine Vengeance. Could it be thought that when the Waters were turned into Blood, and Frogs covered the face of the Earth, and the Dust of it was converted into Lice, and the Plague of Flies followed that of Lice; and Murrain, Flies; and Boils, the Murrain; and Hail, Boils; and Locusts, Hail; and Darknes Locusts; and the killing of the
 First-

The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 381

First-born, the Darkness; that he should yet be so obstinate as not to let the People of *Israel* go; and when he did, should follow them into the midst of the Sea? Could disappointment, vexation, and revenge, so far infatuate him, that Miracle after Miracle, Scourge upon Scourge, could not persuade him, nor the sense of so imminent a danger stop him in his career, but that he persisted in his first resolution, and blinded thus with Rage, pursued it to his destruction? Can it be supposed now, that one from the dead could more have prevailed upon him than this Scene of Judgments? Could it have come with so much Terror? Or if it should, may not the Sinner be alike obstinate and infatuated? May not the like Passions and sensual Affections, or a habit of Sin, keep a Person from hearkening to, or following the Advice of one come from the dead?

Let us consider again, how it was with the *Israelites*, who had not only been Spectators of those Miracles and Judgments in *Egypt*, but stood safe in the midst of them; that were preserved, directed, and fed by a continued Series of Miracles, and yet were not only upon every occasion tempting and provoking God by their distrust, impatience and

murmur-

Sermon
IV.

Exod. 7.
8, 9, 10.

Deut. 1. 32.
Psalms 78.
22. 32. 56.
106. 24.
Nehem. 9.
16.

~~~~~ murmuring, but were for returning in Sermon to *Egypt* again.

## IV.

Thus it was also with their Posterity in our Saviour's time, who notwithstanding the plain fulfilling of their ancient Prophecies in him, notwithstanding the Innocency of his Life, the Purity, Sanctity, and Evidence of his Doctrine, the Power of his Miracles, changing the course of Nature as he pleased; healing the Sick, opening the Eyes of such as were born blind, casting out Devils, and raising the Dead. Nay, notwithstanding his Resurrection, and the unquestionable confirmation of it, yet continued obstinate and incredulous, and what they could not deny, would impute to *Beelzebub*.

Mat. 12.  
24.

Now what comparison is there between the coming of one from the Dead, and this Case? Or what reason is there to conceive that a wicked *Jew* should have been more effectually reclaimed from a vicious course of Life, and be made a Penitent by the coming of one from the Dead, than the *Jewish* Infidel should be made a Convert by all those numerous Miracles, and become a Christian? And why may not the one be as well Impenitent, as the other an Infidel?

2. It

*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 383

2. It may be supposed in reason, that what a Person hears from another, should in a matter of Importance, alike affect him in one Case as in another: And if he is not perswaded by the one, there is no reason to expect he should be prevailed upon by the other. Sermon IV.

Such indeed is the Testimony of one rising from the dead, who must be acknowledged to be a very fit Evidence concerning the reality of a Future State, and the condition of Separate Souls in it, as he has been personally acquainted with it, and had a part in it.

But such also is the Testimony of a trembling Sinner, that after a vicious course of Life, entring upon the confines of Death, and expecting every moment to be snatched away by that inexorable Enemy, feels now the Anguish no less than he formerly relished the Pleasures of his Sin; that cries out in the bitterness of his Soul, That he is sensible, but he fears too late, of his former Folly: That he is now prey'd upon by a Thousand Vipers, and feels a Hell in himself before he descends into it.

And in this Agony calls upon all about him, and the once Sworn Companions in his Vices, to take warning by him, and no longer to entertain themselves with

† the



# 384 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

**Sermon** the Charms of those noxious Pleasures he  
**IV.** is now burdened with the guilt of, and would not for a World repeat, if he was to live his Life over again.

Is not here a living and present Testimony? And if one should come from the Dead, can he say more, or can his Testimony be of greater force concerning the State he comes from, than this of the awakened Penitent, if not despairing Sinner, is, concerning the Evil, the Guilt, and Terror of Sin?

And yet if this be not attended to, or the force of it be soon carried off by a Glass of Wine, and the charms of Company and Temptation, or tract of Time; Can it be supposed that the same Event may not happen to the other? And will not the hardened and impenitent Sinner as much despise, or as soon forget the admonitions of this ghostly Monitor, as those of a dying desponding Friend?

3. It may be expected that what a Person sees himself, should more affect him, than what he hears only by the report of others. And if what he sees, (though in a matter of necessity and importance) makes little or no impression upon him; how can it be supposed, that what he hears only from another should affect him? And this is the case: For if one

came

*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 385

came from the Dead to bear Witness to the truth of a Future State of Recompence, and of the Misery of impenitent Souls in it, it's only Testimony and Report, and what can neither be of that certainty nor force, as if the Person to whom he comes upon this Errand, had himself been in that State. Sermori  
IV.

But now there are those things which a Person sees, and which should in reason, according to the nature of the things, as much move him, as the Testimony of one coming from the Dead.

And of this kind is Death, which we every day have in view, and are no more secured against the very next moment, than those that are already departed.

The plain consequence of which is this, That 'tis then our greatest wisdom so to order our selves and all our affairs, that we may meet it without surprize or terror, and may live as we would wish we had done, when that fatal Hour doth approach.

And yet if we take a view of Mankind, we find them generally as secure, as if they alone were immortal; or as improvident, as if they had Death under such an obligation, that it must give

C c

them

## 386 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~ them time and leifure fufficient to put all  
 Sermon things in order, before it fhall proceed to  
 IV. execute its Sentence.

Now if in a matter fo apparent, fen-  
 fible, and certain, there is fo little,  
 where there ought to be the greateft con-  
 cernment, and Mankind is fo difficultly  
 moved, that they either don't confider,  
 or the Confideration of it makes them  
 no wifer or better; what reason is there  
 to imagine, that the Testimony of another,  
 though it be one from the Dead, fhould  
 make any lafting impreffion upon them,  
 and perfuade them to repent?

4. What a Person feels himfelf, fhould  
 in reason more affect him, than what he  
 hears or fees of others.

And if what he himfelf feels makes  
 little or no impreffion upon him, 'tis not  
 to be conceived, that what he only fees  
 or hears fhould move him.

In confirmation of which, we may re-  
 flect upon the common State and Beha-  
 viour of Mankind, in the Judgments  
 and Afflictions that befall them, the  
 Dangers they are in, the Terrors they  
 are under. In which and the like Cafes,  
 we fhall find them too often infenfible  
 and incorrigible, or inconstant and un-  
 refolved.

Some-



## The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 387

Sermon  
IV.

Sometimes they are insensible under the severest Judgments: As it was with *Abaz*, who for his Idolatry was delivered up to his Enemies; On the East, the King of *Assyria*; on the North, the King of *Israel*; on the South, the *Edomite*; on the West, the *Philistines*, invade and spoil his Territories; as we have it, 2 *Chron.* 28. 5, 6, 17, 18.

And yet when brought thus low for his Transgressions, it's said of him, *In the time of his distress he trespassed yet more against the Lord*, ver. 22.

At other times, if sensible, yet they are inconstant, and in the event prove incorrigible. As it was with the *Israelites*, *Psal.* 78. 34, &c. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and enquired early after God, &c. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, &c. For their heart was not right with God, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.*

Now can it be supposed that an Apparition of one from the Dead should do more than these; and that He should by that be disposed to repent, Whom the severest Judgments left impenitent?

Or suppose the Sinner terrified hereby, and melted into an affectionate temper; yet have we not examples of that

# 388 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

kind every day, of Persons that after all  
 Sermon the Terrors they have been under, are set  
 IV. no nearer to a true Repentance; and tho'  
 they seem for a while by some good Re-  
 solutions to make towards the Kingdom of  
 Heaven, are *not able to enter*, (as our  
 Saviour expresses it) *Luke 13. 24.*

View we then a Sinner under the  
 power of his Convictions, in the time of  
 Danger and Distress, when he has no  
 way to escape.

How terrified has he been in his own  
 Mind at the approaches of Death! How  
 Grave, Solemn and Serious has it made  
 him! How importunate has he been for  
 Mercy, and for some longer time to finish  
 his Repentance! What Promises, Resolu-  
 tions, and Vows has he made! What Im-  
 precations has he wished upon himself, if  
 ever he should prove false to them; and de-  
 sired no Mercy if ever he should break  
 them! Lord, will he say, "Spare me but  
 " this once; try me but once more, and  
 " then if I return to my former Sins, or  
 " neglect to put my self into a capacity for  
 " thy Favour and Mercy, let me never  
 " find it. As it was with *Pharaoh*, who  
 said to *Moses*, *Forgive my Sin only this once,*  
*and intreat the Lord that he may take away*  
*from me this death only*, *Exod. 10. 16.*

Now

*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 389

Now could the Apparition of one from the Dead do more than this? Can we suppose the Sinner more terrified, more seriously concerned and resolved, than when he had his own Conscience thus impartially representing the Case to him, and Almighty God awakening his Conscience by an extraordinary Providence?

Sermon  
IV.

And now let us consider the event of this, and whether after this tender disposition of Mind, and seeming resolution, he is a true Penitent; or that, in the Phrase of the Text, *he will repent*, and that this will necessarily be the issue of it.

Suppose we then this languishing Person rescued out of the jaws of Death by a merciful Providence, and put into the Condition of making a second tryal, and of giving a proof of his thankfulness to God, and of his fidelity to his Sick-bed Vows and Resolutions.

Let us suppose him again breathing in a free Air, and having all the inticing Objects afresh presented to him, that he was before conversant with.

Let us trace him along, and we shall find him, as the terror and sense of his danger wears off, first covertly looking, then remotely following, at last overtaking and closing with the same Tempta-



~  
 Sermon  
 IV.

tions ; and perhaps plunging himself farther into the same licentious State than before.

Grant we now that there is a just reason for the Sinner's Terror, if the Ghost of his deceased Friend, and the once inseparable Partner in his Vices, should appear, and plainly represent to him the desert of Sin in the Miseries of another Life, and the certainty of his having a Portion in them without Repentance. Grant we (and he must be a Stone rather than a Man, whom it has no influence upon) that he is brought by it into the State of *Belshazzar*, Dan. 5. that his *Countenance is changed*, and his *Thoughts so trouble him*, that the *joints of his Loins are loosed*, and his *Knees smite one against another*. Yet still this may be, and he be no true Penitent, nor this prove a means effectual enough to reform him. For a Man repents no farther than his Will and Temper is changed ; and if these remain the same, he no more repents to whom the dead has appeared (whatever Terrors he may be under) than he that was upon the borders of Death : And he may, and will as soon as he, upon occasion, repent of his Repentance. So  
 certainly

## *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 391

certainly true is that which was before  
observed, That the causes which hinder Sermon  
Men from being persuaded to Repentance IV.  
by the Arguments of Scripture, will also  
keep them from being persuaded by  
Means extraordinary, such as the coming  
of one from the Dead. And that the  
*cares of this world, and the deceitfulness* Mark 4.19.  
*of riches, and the lusts of other things,*  
will as well render the extraordinary  
Means ineffectual, as *choke the Word of*  
God, and make it *unfruitful*.

Let God send all the Plagues of *Egypt*,  
and yet *Pharaoh* will harden his Heart:  
Let the Sea be divided, and *Manna* rain-  
ed from Heaven, and Water break out  
of the Rock, and the Water of the Rock  
*follow* them for 40 Years together. Let 1 Cor. 10.4.  
them have a Cloud by Day, and a Pillar of  
Fire by Night as their Guide, and an  
Angel for their Safeguard, and yet the  
*Israelites* will be tempting, provoking,  
and murmuring. Let one come *and do* John 15.  
*the works which none other Man did;* give <sup>24</sup>  
sight to the Blind; feet to the *Lame*;  
health to the Sick; life to the Dead.  
Let the Sun be darkned; the Rocks  
rend; the Graves be opened, and the  
Dead appear: Nay, let him that did all  
this, and for whose sake it was done,

# 392 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~~~~~  
Sermon
IV,

rise again from the Dead, and visibly ascend into Heaven; yet the obstinate *Jew* will be incredulous. Let a Ghost appear, and preach over the despised Doctrines of the Soul's Immortality, and the reality of a Future State, and of a Judgment to come, and reinforce it from his own Knowledge and Experience, and verify all this by his return from the Dead: And yet the Sinner, the customary Sinner, is not to be reclaimed; who *like the deaf Adder stops his ears against the voice of charmers, charming never so powerfully and wisely, Psal. 58. 5.*

It's then all one, whether it be *Moses* and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles, Revelation, or the Resurrection of one from the Dead, when the Temper is otherwise inclined: And if the Honours, Profits, Advantages, and Pleasures of the World do render the one, they will also render the other ineffectual. So true is that, *Wisd. 4. 12.* that *wickedness by bewitching, obscureth the things that are good*; and will disarm all Arguments can be produced, of their Force and Efficacy.

2. I might farther prove this, by considering the reasons why Men don't believe and repent, and the Excuses they make for
delays

The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 393

delays in it, which will as well frustrate the Testimony and Persuasions of one Sermon from the Dead, as it doth the Arguments of Divine Revelation. IV.

(1.) The reasons have been partly shewed already, and they are the prevalence of corrupt Inclinations; the Presence of Temptations; the Habits of Vice; or a Worldly Interest; which are the usual Obstructions to Repentance, and have a greater power over Men to detain them in Sin, than all the Arguments of the Gospel, and the Convictions of their own Minds, have to reclaim them from it. We see that though they have Line upon Line, the most powerful Motives in the World, such threatnings as make them at some times with *Fælix* to trem- Acts 24.
ble: Such comfortable Doctrines as make 25.
them at other times with *Herod*, to hear Mark 6. 20.
gladly: Such moving and awakening considerations, as bring them with *Balaam*, Numb. 23.
to desire to *dye*, and farther than him, 10.
to a desire to *live* the Life of the Righteous; yet they soon fail of their force: And the *Fælix* was the *Fælix* that left his Preacher *Paul* in Bonds: And the *Balaam* Numb. 31.
was the *Balaam* that as well took, as he 16.
loved the wages of unrighteousness: And 2 Pet. 2. 15.
the *Herod* was the *Herod* that beheaded
John

394 The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.

John Baptist whom he sometime observed
Sermon and heard with pleasure.

IV.

For all these Passions are like Qualms that soon pass off, and prevail not so far as to alter the Temper. And where persons are thus under the power of their Lusts, they will continue in the same state, if one came from the Dead to warn and reprove them: And therefore if *John B.* had rose from the Dead, as *Herod* once imagined and believed, it would no more have made him a true Penitent, than the Preaching of that Holy Man did, when alive; as long as *Herodias* was by him to seduce him, and he was contented to be seduced.

Matt. 14. 2.

(2.) The case is the same with persons in delaying their Repentance; and if the Excuse against the present necessity of it prevail in one case, it will also prevail in the other. So that he that will not be persuaded to a present Repentance, by the Arguments of the Gospel, will not be persuaded by the Testimony and Admonition of one from the Dead.

And upon the whole the Question is, Whether a person may not reason the same way, and as much to his own Delusion, against the Testimony and Persua-
sions

The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 395

fions of one from the Dead, as against the Authority and Arguments of Scripture, and at last be as far from Repentance and a present Repentance? Sermon IV.

And whether there is not reason to conclude, That if these and the like Excuses prove sufficient to detain Men in impenitency notwithstanding all the Arguments to the contrary, contained in Scripture; the same will not be of as much force, and have as much influence upon the Sinner, if one should come from the Dead to admonish him?

I am confident that this is not to be gainsaid.

And so the Proposition before laid down remains good, That the reasons for which persons give no heed to, or are not persuaded by the Authority and Arguments of Scripture, to believe and repent, will keep them from giving heed to, and being persuaded by the coming of one from the Dead.

But this is a case I shall not farther prosecute; for it needs Consideration, rather than Proof.

I shall therefore close all with Three or Four Inferences.

1. From hence I infer, That there is no absolute need of any other course to be

396 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~~~~~  
**Sermon**  
**IV.**

be taken for the Conviction and Conversion of Sinners, than what is already taken; or that extraordinary means should be used, where the ordinary are sufficient.

If there be a Revelation, which is believed certainly to be Divine, and the Arguments contained in that Revelation are sufficient to persuade Men to believe and repent, Then there is no need of Miracles, nor of a Voice from Heaven, nor the Resurrection of one from the Dead. If there be impenitency with reason and proof sufficient to convince and persuade Men, there will be impenitency still, with such proof as is more than sufficient. *These things are written that ye might believe, Joh. 20. 31.* And consequently, what is Written, is sufficient to persuade us to a belief of what is Written.

2. God is not bound to give, nor can Men in reason desire or expect, that he should use an extraordinary course where the ordinary is sufficient; and that one should rise from the Dead for their Conviction, who have *Moses* and the Prophets, *Christ* and the Apostles. It was the Temper of *Thomas*, *Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust*

## The Unreasonableness of Infidelity. 397

*thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe, Joh. 20. 25.*

Sermon  
IV.

This was the Temper of the incredulous Jews, *Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe, Matt. 27. 42.* So Celsus the Heathen will have it, *If Christ were the Son of God, that he should have been ὡς πρὸς ὃ ἡλιός, like the* <sup>Origen,</sup> *Sun; and the miserable person here* <sup>l. 2.</sup> *would have one rise from the dead.*

There will be no end if once we exceed the ordinary bounds, and expect evidence beyond what is sufficient: For then Men may require to be rapt up in- <sup>2 Cor. 12.</sup> *to Paradise, as St. Paul was; or to see* <sup>4.</sup> *the heavens opened, and the Son of Man* <sup>Acts 7. 56.</sup> *standing on the right hand of God, as did St. Stephen: Nay, they may be as impertinent as Philip, and say, Shew us the* <sup>John 14. 8.</sup> *Father, and it sufficeth.*

3. We are bound to believe what we have sufficient evidence for; and to repent when the Reasons and Motives to it are sufficient, though we have not all the Evidence that may be given, and that 'tis possible for God to give. 'Tis possible for God to send a *Lazarus* from the Dead, to *testify* unto the impenitent, concerning the certainty of *a place of torment* in the other World.

And

# 398 *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.*

~  
Sermon  
IV.

And 'tis possible, though not very probable, (as I have shew'd) that may be a means to awaken such, and bring Them to repentance, whom the Doctrine of Divine Revelation, and the Arguments of Scripture could not prevail upon. But that doth not lessen the Obligation of believing and doing according to Revelation; and which without such farther evidence is of it self sufficient for their Conversion.

4. Those that have the Evidence of Divine Revelation, and yet do not believe and repent according to that Revelation, are wholly inexcusable; *They have Moses and the Prophets*, saith our Saviour, *let them hear them*; for that was sufficient, and all that was necessary to bring them to Repentance here, and Salvation hereafter. And if they that had *Moses* and the Prophets only, were inexcusable, what can those plead, who have not only *Moses* and the Prophets, but Christ and the Apostles, who have brought *life and immortality to light through the Gospel*? And who must therefore have so many more reasons against them, as there are more for the confirmation of the Truth of our Religion, and for the conviction of Unbelievers, than there were



*The Unreasonableness of Infidelity.* 399

were under the Law : And therefore if any continue in a state of Unbelief and Impenitence under the Gospel, *it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment* than for them. If such do perish, 'tis wholly from themselves : If such do perish, 'tis not through want of Information sufficient to direct them ; not through want of Arguments powerful enough to convince them ; not through want of Authority sufficient to oblige them ; not through want of sufficient Grace to enable them ; not through want of Mercy in God, or Merit in a Saviour, or a Will, Desire or Endeavour in both to save them, but from themselves. And how just will then the Sentence of Condemnation be to such ! How will all Pleas then be prevented ! And how miserable must his case be, that is Condemned by himself before he is Condemned by God !

To conclude,

Here is Life and Death set before us, in the most pressing Arguments ; the most powerful Motives ; the most persuasive invitations to Repentance. We have here proposed to us all that *Moses* and the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles have said to convince us : And we have still,

Sermon  
IV.

 still, through the Merciful Providence of  
 Sermon God, means to assist us in it, and time  
 IV. and opportunity for the performance of  
 it. But the time is coming, and will  
 most certainly come, when, if we have  
 not before believed and repented, Nei-  
 ther *Moses* nor the Prophets, neither *A-*  
*bram*, nor one greater than *Abraham*,  
 will or can relieve us. And therefore  
 how necessary is it for all now to heark-  
 en to *Moses* and the Prophets, to Christ  
 and the Apostles, in this their Day? For  
 if they now hear them not, they can no  
 more hereafter be saved, than they would  
 have been *perswaded though one had rose*  
*from the dead.*

---

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd at a

General Meeting

OF THE

C L E R G Y,

In and about

L E W E S,

JULY 30. 1702.

---

By the Right Reverend,

JOHN Lord Bishop of CHICHESTER.

---

L O N D O N,

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT at the Cross  
Keys between the Two Temple-Gates in Fleet-  
street. 1708.

---



SERMON

Preached at a

General Meeting

OF THE

CLERGY

in and about

L E W E S

July 1702



By

JOHN LORD Bishop of CHICHESTER

LONDON

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT at the Grose  
in the Temple-Gate in Fleet  
Street 1702

## 1 Thess. II. 13.

*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men; but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

**I**N the former Chapter the Apostle St. Paul gives an account of the wonderful Success, which he and his Co-partners, Sylvanus and Timotheus, met with in preaching the Gospel, notwithstanding the fierce opposition stirr'd up against them, as he proceeds to shew in this Chapter.

*For, saith he, your selves know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain. But even after that we suffered before, and were shamefully intreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were hold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God, with much contention.*

Which Courage and Constancy of theirs was a convincing evidence to others, of the truth of what they taught, and of their sincerity in the Profession of it; as he declares, *ver. 2.*

*For, saith he, our Exhortation or Doctrine was not of Deceit, not a cunningly devised*

*devised Fable*, it was not designed to mis-  
 Sermon lead you into any Error (as the word also  
 I. signifies) ἐκ πλάνης.

2 Pet. i. 16. *Nor of Uncleanneſs*, it was not like the  
 obscene and impure Rites uſed among the  
 Heathens; or like the Doctrines of ſome  
 pretended Chriſtians, who ſuited their Re-  
 ligion to the vileſt Inclinations of Mankind,  
 2 Pet. 2. 18. *that through the Luſts of the Fleſh*, they  
*might allure thoſe that were eſcaped from*  
*them, who live in error.*

Ἐν δόλῳ *Nor in Guile*; not corrupting, ſophiſti-  
 2 Cor. 2. 17. cating, or debaſing the Word of God;  
 nor *handling it deceitfully*; ſo as to be a  
 Δολῶντες *Jew with the Jew*, and a *Gentile with the*  
 ἡ ἁβύσσος *Gentile*; complying with each in time of  
 2 Cor. 4. 2. *danger, leſt they ſhould ſuffer perſecution*  
 Gal. 6. 12. *for the Croſs of Chriſt.*

*Neither uſed we flattering words*, ſeek-  
 ing by ſubtle inſinuations, and *fair ſpeech-*  
 Rom. 16. *es, to deceive the hearts of the ſimple.*  
 18.

*Nor a cloak of Covetouſneſs*, and under  
 the pretence of Devotion, Mortification,  
 2 Pet. 2. 3. *and Self-denial, make merchandize and gain*  
*of you.*

*Nor of Men ſought we glory*, ſetting up  
 our ſelves as Heads of peculiar Sects, (af-  
 ter the manner of Philoſophers) nor be-  
 Col. 2. 18. *ing vainly puff'd up by a fleſhly mind*, did  
*we intrude into theſe things, which we*  
*have not ſeen, nor had the Knowledge and*  
*Revelation of (as ſome have pretended).*

And



And when we might have been burdensom, *as the Apostles of Christ*, and under that Character, and by virtue of that Authority, have justly claimed a Maintenance suitable to our Labour and Station. On the contrary, *We were gentle among you, even as a Nurse cherisheth her Children: So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted to you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own Souls.* In confirmation of this, he appeals both to God and themselves, *For, faith he, ye remember, Brethren, our labour and travel, &c. ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved our selves among you that believe. As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you (as a Father doth his Children) that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and Glory.* He appeals, I say, to them, *Ye know, ye remember, ye are witnesses:* And the Success answer'd his Labour, as he shews in the Text.

*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.*

Sermon

I.

In which words we are to consider,  
I. What it was the *Theſſalonians* here received, viz. *The Word of God*: Or how the Apoſtle could ſay it was the Word of God, and not the Word of Men.

II. The manner after which it was received; They received it not as the Word of Men, but as the Word of God.

I. What is here meant by the *Word of God*; or how the Apoſtle could ſay, it was the Word of God, and not the Word of Men.

The Word of God, which the *Theſſalonians* are here ſaid to receive, is the Word that the Apoſtle firſt preached, and then committed to writing: And this is called *the Word of God*, becauſe it was of God's immediate Inſpiration, and is as much the Word of God, and not the Word of Men, as what is ſpoken by Men, and not from Divine Inſpiration, is the Word of Men, and not the Word of God. In proſecution of which Argument, I ſhall,

1. Conſider it in reſpect of its Authority, as it is the Word of God.

2. As a Rule for our Direction in ſeveral caſes of importance.

I. I ſhall conſider it in reſpect of its Authority, as the Word of God; and that I ſhall do by the following Steps or Propoſitions.

(1.) That Almighty of God hath revealed

vealed himself, and made known his Will to Mankind, beyond, over and above, what Sermon we are taught, or can learn from Nature, Reason, and Observation. Of these St. Paul elsewhere takes notice: He reflects upon the Work of the Law *written in our Hearts*: Rom. 2. 14. Upon the Works of the Creation, which are as so many Evidences of the *eternal Power and Godhead*, and upon the Providence of God and his Government of the World; both as to the *Wrath of God which is revealed against all Ungodliness*; and as to his *Goodness, which leadeth to Repentance*. Rom. 1. 18, 24. Rom. 2. 4. But though the Being of a God is thereby plainly manifested, so that Infidels are *without Excuse*; yet however, by reason of the imperfection of these ways of Knowledge, and the corruption of Human Nature, there needed a farther Information, Explication, and Evidence; there needed what we call a Revelation; and this defect all Mankind were sensible of, and therefore were disposed to hearken after a Remedy.

Thus it was it with the *Thessalonians*, who were before Heathens, and had been involved (as the rest of them were) in gross Idolatry; but upon the preaching of the Apostle, and of his Assistants in that Work, there was a wonderful change, as he saith, *They themselves shew of us, what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye*



turned to God from Idols, to serve the living  
Sermon and true God, chap. 1. 9.

I. (2.) This Revelation was made known to particular Persons, chosen of God to be the dispensers of it, for the sake of others, as well as for their own. This was not like Reason, imparted to all Mankind, all were not thus immediately inspired; for then what need had there been of such Teachers as *Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus*, who by a Divine Call, were *allowed and approved of God, to be put in trust with the Gospel*, chap. 2. 4. But our Saviour gave some, *Apostles, and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.*

Ephes. 4.  
, 12.

(3.) That there is an Evidence to be given by them that thus teach, and what in reason may be expected by them that are to be taught, by which the Doctrine may be known and proved to be a Revelation from God, and that it is in truth the *Word of God, and not the Word of Men*: And that is a Divine Testimony; for nothing less than Divine can be an Evidence for what is Divine. If there be a Divine Doctrine in Claim and Pretence, there must be a Divine Power to confirm it. So much is implied here. *Chap. 1. 5. Our Gospel came not unto you in Word only, but also in Power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: If it*  
had

had not come in the Power of the Holy Ghost, it could never have come to a Sermon *πνευματικῶς*, to a full assurance. It is upon this the Author to the *Hebrews* grounds his Exhortation, to give *the more earnest heed to the things they had heard*, because it *began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. 2. 1, &c.* But now this Evidence as well as the Revelation, was peculiar to the Apostolical Age, or the next in Succession: And therefore, since the Apostles, and all other inspired Persons died, and that sort of Inspiration and Evidence ceased, and as it were died with them, there was some other way to be taken for the attesting and conveyance of this to after Ages.

(4.) And that is, that what was thus taught, and after this extraordinary manner confirmed by the Persons inspired, should be by them, or their Direction, committed to writing, for the benefit not only of the present Age, but also of Posterity to the World's end; that (as *St. Peter* saith) *2 Pet. 1. 15* they might be able, after *the decease of the Apostles, to have these things always in remembrance.* This was the reason given by those inspired Persons for their writing. So *St. John*, chap. 20. 30, 31. *Many other signs truly*

truly did Jesus in the presence of his Disciples, which are not written in this Book: But

I. *these are written, that ye (who read, as well as those that saw and heard) might believe.*

(5.) When a Revelation was at first thus attested, and afterwards was committed to Writing by Persons divinely inspired, that is then the Word of God, and not the Word of Men, though written by them, as much as it was so when spoken by them. So the same Evangelist; *This is the Disciple who testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony (whether by Word or Writing) is true.* So our Apostle requires that they should seriously mind what he wrote, as well as what he taught, *I charge (ὁρκίζω adjure) you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.* From thence in all Ages hath the Teacher Authority for what he delivers, and the Hearer for what he receives and believes; And therefore our Saviour and the Apostles did remit their Auditors to the Scriptures of the Old Testament (which were written by Divine Inspiration) as the standing Rule, *2 Tim. 3. 16. 1 Cor. 15. 3, 4. Search the Scriptures, John 5. 39. And St. Paul reasoned out of the Scriptures, Acts 17. 2, 3.*

(6.) From thence it naturally follows, that if what is taught by Persons not inspired, be either the express Doctrine contained in such divine Writings, or be consonant there-



thereunto; such Doctrine is then to be received not merely as the Word of Men (though spoken and delivered by them) but as it is in truth the Word of God. L

All Christians allow the holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, and to be of his immediate Inspiration; and in which he hath made known his Mind and Will to Mankind. All such again generally allow, that there are Teachers appointed by God in Succession, though not immediately Called and Inspired, as the Apostles were; and whose Work and Office it is to expound those Sacred Books, and to instruct the People out of them in all things necessary to their Salvation: And being in the faithful discharge of this their Office, and making the Word of God their Rule, their Doctrine is not theirs, but his that sends them.

What St. Paul wrote is of like Authority with what he taught; and what he taught and wrote was *not after Man*, neither received he it of Man, neither was he taught it but by the Revelation of Jesus Christ, as he professeth, Gal. 1. 11, 12.

And therefore the Doctrine which he taught was to be accounted, as if Christ himself had been speaking and Writing, and of the like Authority and Obligation: So the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5. 21. *Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ; we pray you in Christ's stead.*

And

And now in like manner, if what is taught by others authorized thereunto, be consonant to what St. *Paul*, and the rest of the Divine Pen-men wrote, it is to be regarded as if he and they were still in Person the Teachers, or as if Christ himself were speaking by them.

Such a Doctrine may be called Apostolical and Divine, and is to be accounted, not as in appearance the Word of Men, but as it is in truth the Word of God. Upon this account it is our Church receives the three Creeds, viz. the *Nice Creed*, *Athanasius's*, and the *Apostles*; because they may, (as the Article 8. Article expresseth it) be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.

To which we must refer both Auditor and Teacher; and both are equally obliged to make it their Rule: And under that Notion and Character, I shall in the next place consider the Word of God.

2. The Word of God contained in holy Scripture is a Rule for our Direction in matters of the greatest Moment in the World; such as relate to Faith, Worship, Conscience, Practice, Comfort, and Life Eternal. It is for these we must repair, *To the Law and to the Testimony. They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them.*

Isa. 8, 20.

Luke 16.

29.

Of these in order.

(1.) The Scripture is a Rule of Faith and Doctrine. Revelation, properly so called, and

and Reason, are of a distinct Order and Consideration: For though such Revelation be agreeable to reason, yet it is not derived from it, not to be discovered by it. Of this kind is the process of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, which is wholly to be resolved into divine Revelation. Thus our Saviour states the Case in the reflection he makes upon *Peter's Answer to his Question, Whom say ye that I am? Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God: Saith he, Flesh and Blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven, Mat. 16. 15.*

So saith our Apostle in the place before quoted, *The Gospel which was preached by me is not after Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* And therefore in matters of that Nature, we that have no such immediate Revelation, as *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* had, must have recourse to Scripture, and to Scripture alone for our information in all things necessary to Salvation. Thus our Church sums it up, *Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any Man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite and necessary to Salvation.* Article 6.

When therefore any Point or Doctrine is asserted to be of necessity to be believed, or any



any Precept is required of necessity to be observed, in order to Salvation, we may justly

**Sermon** I. ask, Where is it written? Or what Scripture-proof have ye for it? But if that Evidence be wanting, the Doctrine or Precept so wanting may, and ought to be rejected with an Anathema, *Gal. 1. 8, 9.* This is the Case depending betwixt us and the Church of *Rome*, viz. Whether Scripture be a sufficient and the only Rule to direct and oblige us in what relates to our Salvation? The apparent want of which lays them under a necessity of exposing those holy Books as deficient, obscure, and unintelligible; and of having recourse to Tradition and Church-Authority for their Defence, because they have no better, and durst not venture their Cause upon the Sacred Writings alone. For if their corrupt Doctrines were to be found in those divine Records, and that the Pope's Supremacy, their Churches infallibility, the Doctrines of Transubstantiation and Purgatory, &c. were as legible there as the Birth, Life, Death, the Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour, they would doubtless have made no farther Appeal, nor have call'd in Traditions for their relief; nor injoyn'd that they should be received, *pari pietatis affectu*, with the like pious regard as the Holy Scriptures (as the Council of Trent hath determined. *Sess. 4.*)

It was certainly a presumptuous and impious attempt of that Church, to annex their Sermon-Traditionary Doctrines to the *Nicene Creed*, and to make them to be of equal Authority and Necessity to be received: And when after the Recital of the Articles, they conclude, *Hanc esse verum Catholicam Fidem, extra quam nemo salvus esse posset.*

I.  
The Form of Profess. prescribed by the Decree of *Pius IV.* according to the Decree of the Council of Trent, Sess. 24. Decret. de Reform. c. 1. & 12. \*De Pontif. Præf.

And it is the more presumptuous in them, because many, or most of the learned Defenders of their Church have acknowledged that there is no ground in Scripture for the chief Points that they differ from us in; as the Pope's Supremacy (which \* *Bellarmino* saith is *the sum of Christianity*) Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Indulgences, Image-Worship, &c.

But in the mean while it is to our advantage and satisfaction, that we have a certain Rule to examine all Principles by, and such a Rule as even our Adversaries must acknowledge to be of Divine Authority: A Rule that is as All-sufficient, as it is the only measure of Apostolical Doctrine necessary to our Salvation.

2. The same is to be said as to Divine Worship, which Scripture is an established Rule for. How necessary it is that there should be a prescribed Rule for this, the various Superstitions and Declensions from the Purity of it doth shew, notwithstanding there is so sufficient and perfect a Rule for the

the regulation for it; for if it be so where  
 Sermon there is such a Provision made, what a cor-

I. ruption would it have been, if all were left to Liberty and human Invention. It is indeed wisely provided in the Gospel-Constitution, that it be not under the restraint of such Particularities as were under the Law enjoined, and were strictly to be observed; but it is on the other hand necessary, for the reason before given, that all the chief Lines, and essential parts of Worship, should be drawn out and particularly described: Such are the Object of it, such the Acknowledgment of the great Mediator, in whose Name all our Praises and Prayers should be offered up to the Father; such the Language in which all the Offices of publick Worship should be performed; such the Ordinance by which we are initiated and admitted into the Christian Church; and again, that in which the great Benefits we are made Partakers of by Christ's Death are commemorated. But if we enquire into the Ways of Worship intruded upon the World, we shall often find such Irregularities as have made the Christian Worship to be quite another thing than is contained in Scripture; such representations of God; such other Objects of Divine Worship proposed, as are wholly irreconcilable to it. The Subject then is large, and I shall therefore confine my self to one instance alone, and that is,

the

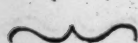


the Adoration given to the Blessed Virgin in the Office of the Church of *Rome*; which that so abounds in, that one would think her Name was to be found in every page of the New Testament, and that there should be a Gospel for her, as well as they have made a Psalter. And what a disappointment would it be to a Person that had been conversant in the Breviary, and other devotional Books of that Church, but meanly skill'd or read in the Scriptures, to find so little said of her in those holy Writings, that her whole History, and all that is spoken of her there, will not make up one single Leaf of the Bible. We thankfully own that she was an extraordinary Person for Piety and Vertue, or else she had never been made choice of to be Mother of our Blessed Saviour: *Blessed was she among* and above all *Women* in the World, that was so *highly favoured*, as to conceive and bring him into the World, *Luke* 1. 28. And she is therefore taken into our Calendar. And yet 'tis very remarkable, that instead of those glorious Appellations and Titles given to her in the Offices of the Church of *Rome*, of being *Queen of Heaven*, and \* that by *the right of a Mother*  
can

---

\* *O Felix puerpera  
Nostra pians Scelera  
Jure Matris impera Redemptori.*

This is generally omitted in the late Forms, and is denied upon occasion to be found in them: But as it was undeniably  
E e in

 *can command her Son, and can shew that Mer-*  
 Sermon *cy to Sinners which he doth not, &c. I say,*  
 I. 'tis very remarkable, that instead of that  
 she should be Thrice reprehended by our  
 Saviour, and spoken of by him in no other  
 term of respect than *Woman*, *John 2. 4.*  
*chap. 19. 26.* And that the Evangelists  
 should use no other than *the Mother of*  
*Jesus*, *John 2. 1.* *Acts 1. 14.* Is it not  
 worthy our notice, that there is no more  
 said of her in those Books, than that the  
 Angel *Gabriel* was sent to a *Virgin espoused to*  
*a Man whose name was Joseph, of the House*  
*of David, and the Virgin's name was Mary:*  
 That he should say, *Hail, thou art highly fa-*  
*voured, the Lord is with thee; and blessed art*  
*thou among Women.* And behold, thou shalt  
*conceive and bring forth a Son, and call his*  
*name Jesus:* That she went upon this to visit  
 her Cousin *Elizabeth*, and both joined to-  
 gether in a divine Hymn, *Luke 1. 26, &c.*  
 That she went to *Bethlehem* with *Joseph*,  
 and was there deliver'd, *Mat. 2. 11.* That  
 she kept what was said upon that, and other  
 occasions in her Heart, *Luke 2. 19.* That  
 after the Nativity she was purified accord-  
 ing to the Law, and went into *Egypt*,

---

in the ancient Offices, so it is still retained in some; as in the  
 Hymn *de Planctu B. Mariæ*; in the *Proprium Festorum Ordinis*  
*Minorum ad Formam Officii Novi redactam.* Printed at Paris,  
 apud *Jacobum Kermer*, 1583. and annexed to the *Missale Ro-*  
*manum ex Decreto Sti. Concilii Tridentini restitutum. Pii. V.*  
*Jussu editum.*

*Mat. 2. 13.* That she went up to *Jerusalem* when he was twelve Years old, *Luke 2.* Sermon

22. That when she found our Saviour in the Temple, disputing with the Doctors, she said, *Why hast thou thus done with us, &c. And kept these things in her Heart, Luke 2.*

48. That she was with our Saviour at the Wedding in *Canaan, John 2. 4.* Went to seek for him at *Capernaum, Mat. 12. 46.* And was with him at the Cross, *John 19. 25.* That she should be but once mentioned in the *Acts*, at the Assembly of the 120, *Acts 1. 14.* and not the least notice of her throughout the Epistles.

It looks as if the Holy Ghost that guided the Sacred Pen-men, did it from a foresight of the great abuse that would in future Ages be put upon the Christian World by the vile Superstition, and gross Idolatry of that Church.

And it shews how necessary it is, that we should keep to the prescribed Rule in the Doctrine and Faith we receive, and the Worship we are to perform to Almighty God, and to assent to what *St. Jerom* saith, *Non credimus quia non legimus.*

*Advers.  
Helvidium.  
Tom. 2.*

3. The Word of God is a Rule of Direction and Conscience. The Apostle saith, *That what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them that are under the Law, Rom. 3. 19.* That where no Law is, there is no Transgression, *Rom. 4. 15.* And that sin is not im-



puted when there is no Law, Rom. 5. 13.

Sermon So that we are not under an Obligation as  
I. to point of Conscience, when there is no  
Law; and what the Law requires of us is  
thereby made our Duty; what the Law for-  
bids, is a Sin; but what the Law neither  
commands nor forbids, may be done or left  
undone, as occasion serves; for it is indiffe-  
rent: It may be a matter of Prudence and  
Expedience, but not of Conscience.

1 Cor. 10.  
29.

The Law of *Moses* forbade the use of se-  
veral Meats, and during that Law the *Jews*  
under that Ministration were obliged in  
point of Conscience to obey it; and it was  
necessary, because of the Divine Command.

Rom. 14.  
2, 5.

But those things being of a positive and  
arbitrary Nature, when that Law was relax-  
ed or abolished, the Obligation ceased, and  
the Unlawful became Lawful; and every  
Creature of God, as it was good in it self, and  
proper for Mankind, so was not upon a point  
of Conscience to be *refused*, if it be received  
with Thanksgiving.

1 Tim. 4.  
3, 4.

In such a case it is as with the Law of the  
Land, which restrains the Liberty of the  
Subject in many instances; and whilst that  
Law is in force, we are for the present as  
much bound up in Practice and Fact, as if  
the Matter were in it self unlawful: But  
the Law being Temporary, and the Matter  
in it self indifferent, the Legislators may,  
according as they see occasion, forbid what  
they

they before commanded, and command what they before forbad, revoke what was established, and then the Subject is at liberty to act or forbear as he pleaseth. Sermon I.

And thus it is in Religion with all positive Laws, which receive their force not from the things themselves, but from the Authority of the Lawgiver; they do oblige or not oblige, according to the pleasure and declaration of Almighty God: But if there is no Command nor Prohibition, we may conclude the thing to be indifferent and matter of Liberty. It being true here, which the Apostle saith in another case, *If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* And our Heart cannot reasonably condemn us, where the Law doth not. So that as to Conscience, the Law of God is the Rule, and where the Law is not a Rule, 'tis no Matter of Conscience. Thus the Apostle determines it in the case of Meats; *Neither if we eat, are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse:* For neither of these things do commend us to God, or oblige us. However, I acknowledge that the Gospel doth often give us general Rules, as to the observation of things in their own nature indifferent, and by which even in that matter we are to govern our selves. Such are,

(1.) The Customs and Usages of the Church and Nation, when falling under

the former Rule, of being neither command-  
 ed nor forbidden in Scripture. When Cu-

I. stoms are founded on things in themselves unlawful, they are the more to be opposed, because they are then like a habit of Sin, which makes the Condition so much the worse; but when a Custom is in a Matter of Liberty in it self, the Custom carries some Authority of Age with it, and expects (as it were) an observance: So it was in the case of taking and administering an Oath, which in the time of the Patriarchs was by putting the Hand under the Thigh, *Gen. 24. 2. ch. 47. 29.* But afterwards, it was by lifting up the Hand, *Ezek. 20. 5, 6, 23. Dan. 12. 7. Rev. 10. 6.* Such was the case of Mens being uncover'd in Divine Worship; the Custom among the *Jews* and *Eastern Nations* had been to be cover'd in such Service; but the contrary afterward prevailed in the Christian Church: And the Apostle argues upon it, as from the reasonableness of it, *1 Cor. 11. 3.* so he thinks fit to end the dispute upon it, *If any be contentious,* and will after all be obstinate and tenacious, let him know *we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God,* ver. 16. He must be of a contentious Spirit, that will in such a case maintain such a singularity.

(2.) Another restraint is Decency, which arises from several Occasions and Cases; as sometimes from divine intimations. Thus



from God's requiring *Moses* to put off his Shoes, *Exod. 3. 5.* probably came that Custom among the *Jews*, of putting off the Sandals when they enter'd the Temple, *Mat. 3. 11.* and from his putting a Veil upon his Face, *Exod. 34. 33.* probably came the Custom of their being veiled in Divine Worship, *2 Cor. 3. 7, 13.*

Sermon  
I.

It were endless to give instances of this kind, but the general Rule is always in force, *1 Cor. 14. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order.* In which case that is oftentimes decent in one Church or Nation, or Age, which is not so in another; and decency being a variable thing, our Practice must go along with the publick Practice, which is a Rule sufficient, and the best guide of Conscience, without farther doubt or scruple, as will farther appear.

(3.) Another restraint is the Conscience of others. Conscience is always a Rule to a Man's self, *and whatsoever is not of Faith is sin*, *Rom. 14. 23.* however he may be mistaken in his opinion. So the Apostle determines the point, ver. 14. *I know, faith he, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* But though a Person is thus fully satisfied in himself, and his satisfaction is grounded upon Truth and Reason, yet since *every Man hath not that* *1 Cor. 8. 7.*

knowledge, he that is thus strong must take heed, lest by any means this liberty of his

I. becomes a stumbling-block to him that is weak; and he be thereby emboldned to do

Ver. 9.

with offence to his own Conscience, which the other doth (suppose) with the allowance of it: As it was in the case of Meat offered to Idols, and afterwards expos'd to sale in the Shambles, or set before them at an Entertainment: The Persons buying or invited were not obliged to ask any Questions about it, but did freely eat, and buy, as if it had not been so offered. But though the strong was not conscious to himself of any unlawfulness in it, yet if a Person weak in the Faith should admonish him about it, as a matter in his Opinion unlawful, the other is to suspend, or forbear for the present, because he is under no necessity, there being a sufficiency elsewhere: And the Earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof. Considering therefore the tenderneſs of the scrupulous Persons, and the danger that may follow, the Apostle doth with great Judgment and Compassion decide the case; and concludes the whole, Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. When he saith, not to the Church of God, it directs us to another restraint; which is,

1 Cor. 10.  
26, 28.

Ver. 32.

(4.) The restraint of Authority; for that releases us from the former, even from

from the yielding to the Conscience of others, if these two are inconsistent. Whilst we are in our own power, Charity and Christian Compassion should attend us; and we may then with the Apostle, comply with the Infirmary of a Brother to the utmost degree. *If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* But

Sermon  
I,

1 Cor. 8.

13.

now where Authority interposes and requires, and the Law of the Land or Church enjoins, we are not in our own power; and then Obedience to the Church of God, or the Civil Government takes place of a private Conscience; and we are obliged to submit to the Injunctions of our Superiors, when there is no higher Authority, no divine Command to hold or restrain us. As for instance; It is a Law amongst us, that all Persons receiving the Sacrament should receive it Kneeling, and not otherwise. It is the command of God that I should receive, but whether kneeling, standing or sitting, is, I suppose, in itself a matter of liberty. But now when the practice of the Church, and the Law of the Land has directed and order'd it otherwise, the offence of a private Person will neither warrant me wholly to forbear to do what the command of my Saviour requires, nor to receive otherwise than the Law enjoins, or the common and universal practice of the Communion doth.

But after all, these are restraints of our Liberty in operation, but do not alter the nature of the things. For true Christian Liberty consists in our Mind and Judgment, and in a freedom of acting as the case shall require: And when the reasons abovesaid do not interpose and restrain, we may safely, and with a good Conscience, practice as we please, act or not act as

the



~~~~~  
 Sermon
 I.

the occasion serves, and as we shall judge it expedient. This case is extraordinarily well adjusted in St. *Augustin's* Epistle to *Januarius*, in the account he gives of his Mother *Monica*, who observing the different Custom of eating or not eating on the Saturday, in *Rome* and *Milan*, advised with St. *Ambrose* what she should do, being often at both.

He told her that the Case was indifferent, it was in it self lawful to fast or not fast, and therefore that she might use her liberty; and when she was at *Rome* to fast, and at *Milan* to eat: And so would not she be an Offence to them, nor they to her. St. *Austin* admires the skilfulness of the Resolution, and looks upon it as if it were an Oracle from Heaven.

This is true Christian Liberty, and he that
 Gal. 5. 1. acts according to this Advice, *Stands fast in the liberty wherein Christ hath made us free.*

I have been the more particular upon this, that I may lay down what I think the most effectual Method for quieting the Minds of Christians; and if we do rightly apply the Apostle's Maxim before quoted, *Where there is no Law, there is no Transgression*; we are at perfect Liberty, to practise as the Church of God practises wherever we are: And though we may perhaps sometimes wish that this or that Article were accommodated more to our liking, yet if it be in a Case not unlawful, the expedience of a quiet Conscience, the expedience of Union among Christians, and Duty of Obedience to Authority is to preponderate and weigh down all other little Prejudices and Dislikes whatever. And he that shall lay those prejudices aside for the sake of these Expediences, will find more ease and satisfaction in himself, than he could do in
 doubting

doubting or cherishing his doubts, or in forbearing; and much more than in imposing publick Orders or Customs of the Church where he is.

Sermon
I.

(4.) The Scripture is the Rule of Life and Practice; and being an universal Law, that reaches every Case, Person and State, it requires of all a strict and universal Obedience, without Exception, Restraint, or Favour. So the Apostle, *James 2. 10. Whoso shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all*: That is, the Authority of the Law is supported by an obedience to it in all particulars therein required. And he that breaks in upon any branch of it, knowingly and wilfully, attempts the whole, and in the sight of God, and with respect to the Legislative Authority, might with as much allowance, nullify and violate the whole: So that our Obedience is to be intire and universal: And by that we may judge of our sincerity, of the truth of our Obedience, and the safety of our State; for our State cannot be safe without Obedience, nor our Obedience sincere without it be intire. And therefore he that lives in the breach of any one divine Law, that lives in the commission of any known and wilful Sin, or in the constant omission of any known Duty, is in effect a Transgressor of the whole Law; and must needs conclude against himself, if he will judge of his State by that which is the chief and most sensible measure for the trial of it. The having respect to all the Commandments, is the best and safest Character to judge by: And if we find upon enquiry, that we live up to this Character, we have laid our Foundation upon a Rock which cannot be shaken. We then approve ourselves to our selves, and to God the judge of all.

Psal. 119. 6.

all. So saith the Apostle, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* This brings me to the next particular, viz.

I.
1 John 3.
21.

Rom. 15. 4.

(5.) The Scriptures are a Rule or Direction for our Comfort: So the Apostle, *Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* The case of Mankind, as it stood or stands without a Revelation, is a state full of Perplexity, and altogether incapable of relief from any thing that can be offer'd by Nature and Reason to prevent or remedy it. Let us consider the Infirmary and Corruption of human Nature, the Terrors of a guilty Mind, the approaches of Death, and the expectation of a future Judgment. Let Nature bring forth its strong Reasons, and make an experiment of its Power; where are the fruits of its Conquest? Where is the Person that hath obtain'd such a Victory over himself, over his Passions and Lusts, his own Strength, so as to have no need of other and better helps to ensure it? Where is the expiation for Sin, or an equivalent that Mankind can rest upon? Where's the Person that can triumph over Death, or that can stand it out in the Judgment? Where's the Person that could quell the Thoughts, and the Fears, and Issue of these by human Wisdom, or by the Principles of Philosophy and Morality? Where are the Gods of *Hamath* and *Arpad*? Where are the Gods of *Sepharvaim*, *Hena* and *Iva*, are they able to deliver Mankind out of the Hands of the *Assyrian*, those great disturbers of the World? Where is that Power that can effectually defeat the Power of Darkness? No! if that be all that ye have to rest upon, we must conclude

conclude in despair, and undergo the sad fate of a *Cain*, an *Achitophel*, a *Judas*. But God be thanked that there is no Malady but what there is a futable Remedy for; the Scriptures come abundantly furnished with Antidotes, with proper Arguments and Considerations: There we have the promises of Pardon, Peace and Reconciliation of God to the Creature: There God has publickly declar'd, That he *desireth not the death of a sinner*, and that *the blood of his Son cleanseth from all sin*.

Now what a comfort and satisfaction is this to a Person who hath known what it is to have uncontrollable Conflicts within himself; that knew not where to rest, nor what to retire to as long as he carries himself with himself, and is pursued by his own guilty Mind, he is encompass'd with Horror and Confusion.

What a Comfort is it now to be relieved, to have his Soul calm and quiet; that when he betakes himself to Rest, can say with the devout Psalmist, *I will both lay me down in peace and sleep; for thou Lord, only makest me dwell in safety*. When he lies upon a Sick-bed with *Hezekiah*, Remember, O Lord, *I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight*. When he is ready to expire, to be able to say with the holy Psalmist, *Into thy hands I commit my spirit, O Lord God of Israel*. And to close his days with the Apostle's saying, *I have fought a good fight, I have finish'd my course, I have kept the faith, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.* Whence doth this good Man derive all this? Whence, but from the Word of God that inexhaustible Treasure of Mercy and Goodness? Whence but from the Promises made to the

Isa. 38. 3.

Psal. 31. 5.

2 Tim. 4. 7.

Sermon

I.

the Penitent? Whence but from his Saviour, from his Atonement and Intercession? Now I would propose it to any Man living, to shew the like example, from whatever other Considerations may be offer'd and found out. Compare a true Christian with an Infidel that questions or denies all this, and see how the balance will turn, or which part any one would take: Whether this that is left to himself, and has but self-created Comforts to support him; or he that fetches his from those Wells of Salvation; that rich Treasure of Peace and Comfort which doth support him in any condition.

It must needs be, that every Person that is upon inquiry and at a loss, is so far miserable, that cries out, *O wretched man, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* And that Person happy, who can with chearfulness say, *Thanks be to God which giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ my Lord.*

(6.) The Scriptures are to be the Rule of Judgment: For as God will judge according to Truth, and will then *render to every man according to his deeds*, so those Deeds will be judged of according to the Gospel. Thus our Saviour declares, *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*

Rom. 2.16.
John 12.
48.

And if Judgment be the last Act, from which there is no appeal, and upon it Men are irreversibly determined to Happiness or Misery, it doth above all things concern them to discern and keep up to that which shall be the final Rule of Judgment, and by which they shall then be sentenced.

And if this be so, and that the Scripture is such a Rule, then by this Men will be enabled to judge of their State now, and to foretel, with-

out

out the Spirit of Prophecy, what will be the Issue, what their Doom at that day.

Sermon
I.

It is a Question of the greatest importance, a Case which certainly above all we should seek for satisfaction in, *viz.* What will become of me in the other World? And how shall I be able to stand in the Judgment? Whether I shall be amongst the Sheep or the Goats, and be determined to the Right Hand or Left of our Saviour; to Salvation or Damnation?

But as important as the Question is, it is not difficult to resolve, if we repair to the Rule, and judge of our Actions and State by it; for such as the one is, such shall the other be: The Rule whereby we are to be judged hereafter, is the same by which we may judge of our State here; and such as our State is here, such shall it be then. There we shall soon find what the Terms are upon which the Proceedings of that day will turn; and then how necessary is it to be well acquainted therewith.

IId. General; which is

The manner and way that the *Thessalonians* received the Word in; which was, as it was the Word of God, and not merely the Word of Men. This is literally true of the Scripture, that it is the Word of God, or a Divine Revelation; and this is reducibly so of all Doctrines contained therein: And so far as those Doctrines are consonant to the Scripture, they be called the Word of God.

And whatever bears upon it that Title, and is the Word of God, and brings with it a sufficient Evidence and Proof of its so being, comes with Authority, and the highest Authority in the World: For what can more oblige us to Reverence, Attention, and Observance, than what God himself teaches and requires.

1. It is, I say, to be received with Reverence,
with


~~~~~  
Sermon

I.

with Seriousness and Consideration. It is so to be received as to the Matter and Subject of it, which is of the greatest Importance and Concernment to us, of no less Concernment than our Eternal Salvation, and that enforced by the dignity of it; when it is, as it were, God speaking to us. And this is an Argument the Apostle makes use of, *Heb. 12. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him [Moses] that spoke on Earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven.* And then how ought we (as the Apostle proceeds) to serve God with reverence and godly fear: With what seriousness and devotion should we hear or read the Divine Oracles? If this were well consider'd, that we in all our Services consider'd that we are in the Presence of God, and have him dictating to us, and instructing us, how would it affect us?

2. The Word of God is to be received with Attention. There is (as I have said) that Authority in it that commands our regard, and if it fails in it, it must proceed from Infidelity, Carelessness, or gross Stupidity. But surely if any thing can prevail upon Men, and bring them as it were to themselves, it must be a consideration, and a consideration grounded upon such Authority as this before us is; it must be Attention that must affect them, and it must be the nature and weight of the Argument that must bring Men to attend: And without this all is lost upon them.

3. The Word of God is to be received with Observance, and the putting in practice the Doctrines and Instructions we receive: And that is the issue of all, That we be *doers of the word, and not hearers only*, lest we deceive our selves, James 1. 22. Of

*Of Justification by Faith.*

---

A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

C L E R G Y,

In the Parish Church of

ALL-SAINTS in CHICHESTER,

*October 7. 1702.*

---

By the Right Reverend

JOHN Lord Bishop of CHICHESTER.

---

L O N D O N,

Printed for RICHARD CHISWELL at the *Rose* and  
*Crown* in St. Paul's Church-Yard, and BER-  
NARD LINTOTT at the *Cross-Keys* between  
the Two *Temple-Gates* in *Fleetstreet*. 1708.





## ROM. V. I.

*Therefore being justified by Faith, we  
have Peace with God, through  
our Lord Jesus Christ.*

JUSTIFICATION by Faith is, by One of the first in the Reformation in Foreign Parts, said to be, *Articulus stantis & cadentis Ecclesiae*, a Point on which the Foundation of the Christian Religion doth subsist. And being of such Consequence in it self, as we must needs own it to be, not for his saying so much (though that is well enough expressed) as for that it is grounded on Scripture, it is of great Use to have a right Notion of it. And it is for that reason that I have at this time made choice of this Subject, which our Apostle in his other Epistles, but more especially in this, doth so much insist and enlarge upon.

In discoursing upon which the Apostle considers Mankind under a Threefold Character, as *Gentiles, Jews, and Christians*.

The First of these he discourses upon in the First Chapter, and describes their State, which in the Conclusion appears to be very deplorable.

Sermon

II.

The Second State, though much more excellent than the First, having a Revelation, which they had not, yet was very defective, and even under that Dispensation there needed a Reformation.

So that the Apostle infers in the Third Chapter, that both *Jews* and *Gentiles* were *all under Sin*; and *all the world was guilty before God*, ver. 19.

What then is to be done?

There remains therefore the Evangelical State, which is by way of Remedy: This the Apostle calls a *Righteousness without the Law*, chap. 3. 21, 22. but which (he saith) was *manifested by the Law and the Prophets, even the Righteousness of God which is by Faith of Jesus Christ*. And of this he gives an Instance, chap. 4. in *Abraham*, who lived before the Law given to the *Jews*, and consequently could not be justified by it: And yet *Abraham* was justified, and had a Faith which was *imputed to him for righteousness*, ver. 20, 21, 22.

From hence the Apostle proceeds to the Application of this History, ver. 23, 24, 25.

Now, saith he, *it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus*  
our

## Of Justification by Faith.

437

our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our Justification. Serm<sup>on</sup> II.

From all which he infers in the Text, *Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God; through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

In which Words there is,

I. The State we are brought into, signified in the Term *justified*.

II. The Condition upon which we are justified, and that is Faith: *Being justified by Faith.*

III. The Privilege consequent upon our Justification, and that is, *Peace with God.*

IV. The Means by which this Grace and Favour is conferred upon us, that such a Covenant is made, and such Conditions are offered, and such a Privilege is annexed to it; and that is *through Christ. Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

I shall observe this Order, in the farther Prosecution of this Argument.

I. I shall consider the State we are admitted into, and that is, That we are *justified*.

To justify is a Forinsecal or Law-Term, and is no other than to clear, acquit, and discharge by some solemn Act and Declaration. So Deut. 25. 1. *If there be a con-*



troverſy between men, and they come into judgment, that the Judges may judge them,

II. then they ſhall juſtify the righteous: That is, if a Perſon appears upon a due and impartial hearing, to be innocent of the Fact he is taxed with, he ſhall forthwith be acquitted.

So that to juſtify, implies that a Perſon is impleaded, and has an Accuſation brought againſt him, and that upon his Trial being found not guilty, he is juridically and finally diſcharged.

And this may reſpect a Threefold Caſe.

1. It reſpects the Caſe of a Perſon, that upon a Charge and Allegation againſt him, after a full Tryal and Examination has been found innocent, and by the Sentence of the Court has been thereupon acquitted.

But this is a Caſe that belongs not to us, it's a Plea none can make or inſiſt upon, with reſpect to God, as our Apoſtle had ſhewed, *chap. 1. 2, 3.* Where he had proved both *Jews and Gentiles* to be all under Sin, and all the world to be guilty before God; as he ſaith, *chap. 3. from ver. 9. to v. 23.*

2. Another Caſe is, when the Delinquent has upon due Examination been found guilty, but by ſome after-Acts doth

doth make such sufficient Amends and Reparation for his former Miscarriages, and thereby deserves so well of his Prince and Country, that it would be a manifest Piece of Injustice to impute his former Faults to him, and punish him for them. This is the Case of Merit. So the Apostle, *chap. 4. 4. To him that worketh* [so as to Merit,] *is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

This again belongs not to us; for all *boasting* is here *excluded*, *chap. 3. 27.* For if Man could not merit when he was Innocent, and neither retaliate what he had received, nor claim Eternal Life upon the virtue of any Performances of his; then how can he be supposed to merit, when he has been found Guilty, and justly forfeited the Favour he before received?

3. Another Case is, when a Delinquent is found Guilty, but upon an Act of Indemnity and Oblivion tender'd by the Prince to such as are within the Terms of it, and upon pleading such an Act of Grace, he is discharg'd.

And this is our Case; When we that were before Criminals, and so fell under the Sentence of Death and Condemnation, were by the special Grace and Favour of God taken into a new Covenant; and

without any pretence to Innocency on the Sermon one hand, or to Merit on the other,

- II. were justified and received into Favour. So our Apostle, *chap. 4. 5. To him that worketh not, [by way of Merit,] but believeth on him that justifieth* [those that were once] *the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness:* That is, is so accounted, that it shall be accepted as if it was a Righteousness originally and completely Perfect; and he shall be as fully Justified, as if he had been wholly Innocent.

So that Justification in the Gospel Sence, is not with respect to the Innocency or Merit of the Person, as if he was clear of all Fault, or deserved not to be punished; but that though Guilty, and liable to the Penalty, there is Mercy allowed, and offer'd; upon a claim to which, and the fulfilling of the Terms therein appointed, he is by a Rule of Court, as it were, acquitted. As a Criminal has a Right to the Mercy and Favour of the Bench, that produces a Pardon, or pleads an Act of Indemnity, and upon such a Plea is in Equity to be discharged, and no longer to be detained, and no more to be punished, than if he had never offended.



## Of Justification by Faith.

441

Such are then *justified from all things* that might heretofore have justly been alledged against them. Sermon II.

They are therefore then said to be *washed* and to be *righteous*; and have a Claim and a Right to all the Privileges of that State. (As I shall presently shew.) Acts 13.39.  
1 Cor. 6.11.  
1 John 3.7.

But this Justification is not so of Grace, as to be without any Condition on our Part. The Apostle doth cautiously prevent any such Surmise and Misconstruction, by what he here saith, *being justified by Faith*. To grant an Act of Oblivion, belongs to God the Governor; to Justify belongs also to him, and both are free Acts of His; (as I shall shew.)

But the Condition, though appointed by God, belongs to us, and what we are to perform, it is by Faith. He it is that justifies us upon our Faith: Which is the next thing to be Consider'd.

II. Here is the Condition upon which we are Justified, and that is *Faith*. We are sometimes in Scripture said to be Justified by *the Grace of God* and by *the Blood of Jesus*, as we are here said to be Justified by Faith; but all conspiring to complete the Sence.

(1.) For when we are said to be Justified *freely by the Grace of God*, Rom. 3. 24. it is as that was the impulsive Cause moving

ving him thereunto; it being purely of  
 Sermon his Grace that Almighty God offers us

II. Terms of Peace and Reconciliation, antecedent to any Acts of ours. So our Apostle, *Rom. 4. 6. David describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth*

Titus 3. 5. *righteousness without works*, that is, without any Consideration of what was done, or could be done on our Part to procure it.

And accordingly, the Gospel-Covenant is here called the *free gift*, ver. 15, 16.

Chap. 8. 33. In which Sence, it is God, and God  
 Chap. 3. 26. alone, that Justifies, and so he is called the *Justifier*.

(2.) We are said to be Justified *by the Blood of Christ*. So it is here said, ver. 9. that is, as the Death and Sufferings of Christ were the procuring and meritorious Cause of our Justification; and by  
 Heb. 1. 3. Virtue of which, he is said to have *purged*  
 ch. 9. 14. *us from our sins*, and we are said to be *washed from our sins in his blood*, Rev. 1. 5.

In which Sence it is Christ, and he alone, that Justifies. So our Apostle, ver. 18. *By the Righteousness of one* [that is Christ] *the free gift* [of Pardon and Reconciliation, ver. 10.] *came upon all men unto justification of life*. By Him alone, and by no other, are we thus Justified. Thus doth the 11th Article of our Church describe it. viz. "We are accounted  
 " Righteous,

“ Righteous, only for the Merit of our  
“ Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; by *Sermon*  
“ Faith, and not by our own Works and *II.*  
“ Deservings. Wherefore that we are Ju-  
“ stified by Faith only is a most whole-  
“ some Doctrine, and very full of Com-  
“ fort; as it is more largely expressed in  
“ the Homilies.

(3.) We are justified by *Faith*; so in the Text: That is, as Faith in Christ is the Condition upon which we are justified; and is so necessary a Condition, that without it we cannot be justified.

In which Sence it is Faith alone that justifies, as our Article saith.

So that we are said to be justified by each of these; that is, by the Grace of God, by the Blood of Christ, and by Faith: By the Grace of God, as the Impulsive and Moving Cause; by the Blood of Jesus, as the Meritorious Cause; and by Faith, as the Condition: And we are justified by each of these alone; that is, there is no other Impulsive Cause but the Grace of God; no other Meritorious Cause, but the Blood of Christ; and no other Condition, but Faith.

All which do amount to thus much, That Almighty God of his mere Grace and Favour did send his Son to dye as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of Mankind;



kind; and upon our Faith in him, doth  
 Sermon for his sake justify us, and deal with us as  
 II. if we never had offended. So our Apostle;  
 ver. 10. *When we were enemies, we were  
 reconciled to God by the death of his Son.*  
 And chap. 4: 5. *To him that believeth, &c.  
 his Faith is counted for righteousness.*

And since all this in the Conclusion  
 doth depend upon our Faith, it remains  
 to take that into our Consideration, that  
 we may have a right Notion and Under-  
 standing of it.

'Tis said here, *being justified by Faith;*  
 by which we are to understand, not a mere  
 Notional Faith (for that is no other than  
 an Assent to the Truth of what is reveal-  
 ed) but a Faith in operation, a Faith active  
 and vigorous, and that doth comprehend  
 in it all that Duty and those Graces,  
 which elsewhere in Scripture are made the  
 Condition of the Gospel-Covenant, and  
 which give us a Title to all the Privile-  
 ges of it, such as Forgiveness of Sin, A-  
 doption and Glorification: And that is a  
 Practical Faith, and to which Repentance,  
 Obedience, and Perseverance do belong, as  
 the essential parts of it. When I say, that  
 the Faith which justifies is supposed to in-  
 clude in it such Conditions, and as ne-  
 cessarily to be so understood, as if particu-  
 larly expressed, it is agreeable to Scrip-  
 ture-

ture-Order, where it is customary, 

(1.) To understand Notional Points and Phrases in a Practical Sense. As when Life Eternal is promised to the Knowledge of God, *John 17. 3. This is life eternal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* That Knowledge is not there supposed to be alone; but as accompanied with the Love of God, and Obedience to him, &c. And since Faith alone can no more save, than Knowledge alone can; when the like

Sermon II.

Blessings are promised to Faith that are to Knowledge, it must be understood with the same Proviso, and in a Complex and Practical Sense. In like manner, James 2. 14.

(2.) Where there is a Connexion of Graces, and Duties, and Acts, all concurring to the same end, it is usual in Scripture to put any one for the whole of that kind; and all are there supposed to be present and mutually concurring. As it is in Repentance, of which Confession to God is but one Branch; and yet being an essential and necessary part of that *godly sorrow which worketh repentance*, the Apostle puts it for the whole: *1 John 1. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, &c.*

And thus it is in the Case before us; because Faith is a necessary Condition of the

the Gospel-Covenant, and the first Principle of all Spiritual Life and Operation

**Sermon** II. in us, we are therefore said to be justified and saved by it: Not as if that alone, exclusive of all other Graces and Duties, did justify and save, without Repentance, Regeneration, and new Obedience, without the Love of God, and other Christian Graces; but supposing them as equally necessary to our Acceptance.

Thus the *Publican* is said to be *justified* upon his Repentance, *Luke 18. 14.* And a New Creature avails to the same purpose as Faith. For when the Apostle had said, *Gal. 5. 6. Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but Faith which worketh by love:* In the next Chapter he saith, *Gal. 6. 15. Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature;* thereby intimating, that Faith and Regeneration are the same, or rather are necessarily required and conjoined to the same Effect; so that where the one is, there the other also is.

And thus it is also in Faith and Works: For as our Apostle here saith, we are justified by Faith, so he saith *the doers of the Law shall be justified*, *Rom. 2. 13.*

And St. *James* expressly saith, That *Abraham* was justified by *Works*, *Jam. 2. 21.*

And,



And, which is remarkable, appeals for the Proof of this, to the very same Scripture-Quotation of *Gen. 15. 5, 6.* which *St. Paul* produces for his Assertion, that we are justified by Faith, *Rom. 4. 3, 22.* Sermon II.

For thus *St. James* argues, *Was not Abraham our father justified by Works, when he had offered his son Isaac upon the Altar, &c.?* And it follows, *The Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness,* ver. 23.

Now how could the Two Apostles quote the same Scripture, the one for a Justification by Faith, and the other for a Justification by Works, if the Faith in one were not the same as Works in the other? Nay, how could *St. James* prove his Assertion, That *Abraham* was justified by Works, from a Quotation, that *his Faith was imputed to him for Righteousness*, if his Faith and Works were not the same? And that is no other than a Practical, an Obediential Faith.

Such a Faith as *Abraham's* was, who staggered not at the Promise. Such a Faith as *Abraham's* was, when at God's Command he offered his Son *Isaac* upon the Altar. And thus *St. James* proposes him as an Example, ver. 22. *See thou how Faith wrought with his Works,*  
and

~  
Sermon  
II.

*and by Works was Faith made perfect: And therein, saith he, the Scripture was fulfilled.* If we take this Key, and thus understand it, that Apostle's way of Arguing is Clear and Natural, and home to the purpose he produces it for. So he divinely infers, as the sum of all, *ver. 24. Ye see then how that by Works a man is justified, and not by Faith only;* that is, We are Justified by both, both concurring to the same end.

And therefore what the Scripture doth thus joyn together, we are not to sunder; lest we pervert the Order and the Sence of it.

We find in Scripture, That by the word *Soul* is often understood the Person, consisting of Body and Soul. Thus the Souls that went down into *Egypt* are said to be sixty six.

Gen. 46.  
26.

We find (as aforesaid) that Confession is taken for Repentance.

But now how absurd would it be to conclude from hence, That the Souls of *Jacob's* Family went down into *Egypt* without their Bodies? Or that if we only confess our Sins to God, though we forsake them not, they shall be forgiven; and by Virtue of that Confession alone we shall be Accepted and Pardoned.

And

## Of Justification by Faith.

449

And as absurd is it to think, when we are said to be Justified by Faith, that Evangelical Obedience is thereby excluded, without which *Faith is dead*, saith St. James.

Sermon

II.

James 2.  
20, 26.

To conclude this, we see what a strict connexion there is between all the Graces and Duties, and I may add, the Privileges of the Gospel, which make up the whole of that Covenant, as to us, betwixt God and Man. And this Chain is admirably represented by our Apostle, *Whom he called, them he also Justified, and whom he Justified, them he also Glorified*; (for so I understand it.)

Ch. 8. 30.

And consequently, upon the same Terms they shall be glorified hereafter, upon the same they are Justified now: And if they are not Glorified upon any other Terms than Faith, Repentance, and Obedience, they are not Justified upon any other.

For if a Person might be Justified upon any other Terms, than those are which he shall be glorified upon, then he may (contrary to our Apostle's arguing) be Justified, and yet not be Glorified. But if he that is Justified, shall be Glorified, (as our Apostle assures us) then what is necessary to Glorification is also necessary to Justification: And consequently, if the

G g

Faith



**Sermon** Faith that Glorifies be not a Solitary Faith, but inclusive of Obedience, then the Faith that Justifies is of the same kind; and a Man can be Justified no more than he can be Saved, without a Faith working by Love, and an Obedience suitable to our Faith.

Having thus far consider'd the nature of that Faith, which our Justification depends upon, I shall in the Third Place proceed to the

III. Consideration, Of the Privilege of that State, which is *Peace with God*.

And that implies,

Pardon for what is past; an Acceptance of our Persons and Services for the time to come, and a Reward consequent upon it.

(I.) Pardon for what is past.

*Being Justified by Faith*; that is, having performed those Conditions which the Gospel requires, we have Peace with God, all ground of Difference is removed. We are then, by Virtue of the Atonement made by Christ, in a State of Reconciliation; and notwithstanding all the Threatnings denounced against Sinners, and which belonged to us whilst in a State of Unbelief, Impenitence, and Disobedience, we are as secure, as if there never had been any such Threatnings, nor we had ever

ever been obnoxious to them. For where the Gospel Qualifications are found, such as Faith and Repentance, we are as fully Justified and Acquitted as if we had never Offended, but had inviolably kept the whole Law of unerring and perfect Obedience; and may with as much assurance plead the Promise of God in our own Favour, for the Remission of our Sins, and for a Title to Everlasting Life and Salvation, as *Adam* might have pleaded a Right to Life upon the Promise, if he had never fallen, but continued stedfast in his Original State.

Sermon  
II.

For Repentance is to us, what Innocence was to him, and places us in the same Circumstances of Favour. So that now it is not the Nature, the Number, or the Kind of Sins past, nor the Aggravations they may be attended with, that debar us, and render us incapable of the Divine Mercy; but it is the rejecting of the Terms offer'd, our Unbelief, and final Impenitence, that do exclude us. We are now *justified from all things*; And *there is now no condemnation*, *Acts 13.39*, *Rom. 8. 1.*

And is not this an unspeakable Privilege? For what is a Sinner, but one that has God for his Enemy, that stands obnoxious to the Displeasure of an Almighty Power? What is a Sinner, but one that

~~~~~  
 Sermon
 II.

has the Law against him, and by the just Sentence of which he stands convicted, and condemned to receive the Wages of Sin, which is Death? What is a Sinner, but one that has the whole Creation against him? The Flood swept away the Ungodly. The Fire from Heaven consumed a wicked *Sodom*. And it is the Creature as armed in the Cause of their Creator. What is a Sinner, but one that hath his own self for his Enemy, and the Terrors of his own guilty Mind to conflict with? What is a Sinner, but the most miserable of all Creatures?

Ask but the Sinner himself, when he is from under the Power of Temptation, when his Blood is cool, when he is alone, and hath a Heart to consider. Ask him when under the Pressure of Affliction, when confined to his Bed or his Chamber by a painful or wasting Disease, and by that taken off from all the Diversions of the World, and that perhaps his Body as well as his Mind pay the Price of his Extravagances.

Ask him again, when he is upon the Confines of Death, and he is taking his last Farewel of all his Pleasures and Sensual Gratifications; when his Pomp and his Wealth, and the dearest Enjoyments of Life are upon the point of expiring with himself:

himself: When there is nothing left him, nothing to pass with him over the Gulph, but the Terrors of a guilty Mind, the sad Presages of what he is to expect as the Wages of all in another State. *Sermon II.*

Ask again that miserable Wretch (if he were to be consulted) when he left behind him his Plenty and his Five dissolute Brethren, *Luke 16. 24.* when he wanted a Drop of Water to cool his inflamed Tongue.

Ask any of these, If the Guilt and Punishment of Sin be not a Burden insupportable; and consequently, the Forgiveness of it the greatest Privilege that can be tendered to, hoped for, or enjoyed by Mankind.

Nay, if the Sinner be resolved to run the Venture, and is not to be instructed or persuaded by the dear-bought Experience of such that have gone before him in that unhappy Course; it is but a little while, when he will be taught by his own, what it is to want a Pardon, when he is to seek it, and perhaps seeks it too late to find it: When he will find the Door to be shut, and Mercy inexorable to all his importunate Intreaties; and he like the Five Foolish Creatures in the *Matth. 25.* Gospel, shall be answer'd with a *Verily,* ^{12.}
I know ye not.

~~~~~  
Sermon

II.

And yet as great a Privilege as this is, 'tis what every Sinner is invited to accept of; 'tis what every Sinner in this World hath the Promise of, if qualified for it by Faith in Christ, and Repentance from dead Works. He will then be justified, he shall be pardoned.

This is given as the Sum of the Gospel, *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them,* 2 Cor. 5. 19.

2. The next Branch of the Privilege belonging to a Justified State, and included in the Phrase, *Peace with God*, is, Acceptance of our Persons, called in Scripture *Adoption*, which gives us the Title of Children. So our Apostle, chap. 8. 15. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father.*

A Title that sets us in the nearest Relation unto God, and gives us the surest Title to his Favour. A Consideration that begets in us a blessed Tranquillity of Mind, a secure Dependence upon him, an entire Resignation of our selves to his disposal, a patient expectation of Events; and quiets and establishes the Heart under all Difficulties whatsoever.

For

## Of Justification by Faith.

455

Sermon  
II.

For what of Kindness, Tenderness, and Compassion, what of Beneficence and Favour is there not comprehended in so near a Relation? The Apostle St. John wants words to express it: *Behold, saith he, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! — Beloved, now we are the sons of God, 1 John 3. 1, 2. See how our Saviour improves it, Matth. 7. 9. What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more will your Father which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him? And accordingly he hath taught us, when we pray, to say, Our Father which art in heaven: Which is the ground of an humble Assurance in our selves, and of a sincere Confidence and Trust in him; that like an Indulgent Father he will pity our Infirmities, pardon our Sins upon our Repentance, and in all things act suitably to the Relation we stand in to him, and to the Circumstances in which we are. So the Psalmist represents it; Like as a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: For he knoweth our frame, Psal. 103. 13, 14.*

G g 4

I may



Sermon  
II.

I may add,

3. *Peace with God* implies the gracious Acceptance of our Services, when springing from a good Intention and a sincere Mind, notwithstanding the many Imperfections which may, and more or less do necessarily attend them. Especially if it be consider'd, that they are presented through the Intercession of a prevailing Advocate, Christ Jesus, who by his Acceptance of them, and upon his Mediation, makes them as it were his own; and though imperfect in themselves, yet for his sake they are esteemed as if they were perfect. They are then estimated not according to their proper and inherent Value, (for what proportion can there be between Infinite and Finite, Perfect and Defective?) but, if I may so speak, according to the Image and Superscription they bear; as they are the Performances of Obedient Children, and are presented, (as I have said) by our High Priest, *who is holy and undefiled, and who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.*

Heb. 7. 26.  
ch. 8. 1.

I observe farther,

4. That in this Phrase *Peace with God*, there is implied a mutual Reconciliation; and that upon our Reconciliation to Him, through Christ, he as a mark of his Reconciliation

conciliation to us, gives us his Holy Spirit. So our Apostle, after he had said Sermon that we have access by Faith into this II. Grace, wherein we stand; in consequence ver. 2. 5.

of that he saith, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. So Galat. 4. 6. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father: The Spirit of God being the Divine Power which doth bring our Spirits into a due Conformity to it self.

And yet as if this were not sufficient, our Apostle carries the Argument farther, ver. 9, 10. Being Justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him: For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

After all, we may observe how cautiously the Apostle doth express himself; for after he had proposed Abraham as an instance of one Justified by Faith, he farther explains himself; that so we might not mistake, and think that it was for the sake of Faith alone, and of Faith at large, that we are Justified; but as our Faith has relation to Christ, to Him as the Object of it, and to Him as the Means

Means by whom that Favour was procured. So in the Text, *Therefore being*

II. *Justified by Faith we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by Faith into his Grace wherein we stand.*

It is through him that the Favour of Almighty God is conveyed to us. Are we justified freely by his Grace? It is through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Rom. 3. 24.

Is Peace made for us? It is by the Blood of his Cross that he reconciled all things to himself, Col. 1. 20.

Have we Forgiveness of Sins? It is through his Blood, Ephes. 1. 7.

Are we adopted to be his Children? It is by Jesus Christ, Ephes. 1. 5.

Do we offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God? It is by Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 2. 5.

Are we made strong? It is in the Lord, and in the power of his Might, Ephes. 6. 10.

Is God said to save us by the renewing of the Holy Ghost? It is, as 'tis shed on us through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. 3. 5, 6.

Is Eternal Life the Gift of God? It is through Jesus Christ, Rom. 6. 23.



## Of Justification by Faith.

459

In short, we are said to be Pardoned, to be Justified, to be Accepted, to be Sanctified, to be Saved by him. Sermon  
II.

So that from the beginning to the end of the Gospel, through the whole Contexture and Frame of it, Christ is interwoven, it is all done by him, or through him, or of him. By him the Grace, and Favour, and Gifts of God descend upon us; and by him again all that we do is sanctified, accepted, and rewarded.

After this manner speaks our Apostle, 1 Cor. 1. 30, 31. *Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

There is then no Religion without Christ; *for other Foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 3. 11: And no Favour or Salvation is there to be obtain'd, but through him, Acts 4. 11, 12. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*

If it should be enquired whence all this proceeds, that there is such a Scheme or Order laid down, and that through all the parts of it Christ is thus essential to it, thus interwoven with it?

I an-

 I answer, It is partly with respect to  
**Sermon** Christ himself, partly with respect to us.

**II.**

With respect to himself; and that the Apostle doth with great Emphasis describe, Phil. 2. 6, &c. *That being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, &c. and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* That is that upon these two Acts of Debasement, in taking upon him the form of a Servant, and becoming obedient unto the death of the Cross, he was exalted by God to this Supreme Authority.

But this, though a Reason as to himself and his Exaltation, yet hath not that immediate respect to us, unless we take in the Reason of his Sufferings; and that, besides the intimation in this place, our Apostle elsewhere abundantly supplies, and particularly, 2 Cor. 5. 21. *He [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin [or Sin-offering]*

Offering] for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him : That is, that we might be pardoned by virtue of the Atonement he made; and we for his sake might be accepted, and our imperfect Services rewarded, as if we were righteous, and they were perfect.

Sermon  
II.

Now then, since it is manifest from the whole, that God would not pardon Sin without a Propitiation, nor accept our Services without a Mediator, it gives the Reason why He, who is both, should be thus dignified by the Father, and why this Article is so often inserted in Scripture, and made the Basis of our Religion, and made an essential Article for us to believe.

And especially doth the Apostle very pertinently introduce it in the Text, when having said, *being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God*, he immediately adds, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*; lest our Faith should be thought to be the Reason, as it is the Condition of our Justification.

No, it is He and He only, *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*; that according as it is written, *He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord, and in him alone.*

From



~  
Sermon

II.

1 Cor. 1.  
23, 24.

Rom. 5. 2,  
3, 11.

From all which we may observe, That as the Love of God in Christ is the great Subject of the Holy Scriptures; so it shews what is to be the chief Subject of our Thoughts as Christians; and of our Discourses and Instructions as we are the *Ministers of Christ*, 1 Cor. 4. 1. That we *preach Christ crucified*, as the *Wisdom of God*, and the *Power of God*. And this not only in contradiction to those that oppose it now, as the *Jews* and *Greeks* heretofore did, to one of whom it was a *stumbling-block*, and to the other *foolishness*; but also and more especially, as it is the sole ground of our Peace and Comfort. Our Apostle could not reflect upon it without a Transport of Satisfaction; he was, as it were, in an Extasy upon the Contemplation of it: *We rejoice*, saith he, *we glory*, — *we joy in God*, *through our Lord Jesus Christ*, *by whom we have received the atonement*.

By which there is such ample Provision made for the Quiet of our Minds, as will answer all the Exigences, scatter all the Fears that the Minds of poor Sinners are entangled with.

What are the Causes from whence all these Miseries do spring? From whence do they arise? but from the Corruption of their Nature, the Power of Temptations,

tions, the Terrors of their own Consciences, the Imperfections of their Services, the Natural Fears of Death, and the Dread of a Future Judgment; each of which carries Despair along with it, if we have nothing to have recourse to, but Nature and Human Conduct.

But now through Jesus Christ we are in all these *more than Conquerors*; by whom, instead of the Complaints of *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me!* we can triumphantly say, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Sermon II.  
Rom. 7.  
24, 25.

And into what can all this be resolved, but into the Favour and Grace of God through Christ? since it is all this while upon such a Condition, as by no means can enter into the Consideration; for it is no other than Faith, by which we are here said to be justified.

But after all, who can think of being Justified and Saved for a worthless and ineffectual Faith; a Faith that Men might have been as Good without as with it; *a Faith of Devils*, that with their Faith Jam. 2. 19. continue to be Devils still?

Can we suppose this to have been the Faith of *Abraham*, or would he upon the account of such a Faith have been stiled *the Father of us all*? And would it have Rom. 4. 16. been said by our Apostle, *It was not writ-*

*ten for his sake alone, that it was imputed unto him, but for us also? Or rather,*

**III.** *would it have been written at all, if he had not shewed the Power of his Faith by as powerful Works? Or can we think we are Imitators of him, if we stagger in our Obedience, how firm soever we would be thought to be in our Faith?*

No, it must be an operative and an effectual Faith, a Faith that purifies the Heart, and governs the Life; that carries through all the difficulties of this our Pilgrimage here, and that makes us to aspire after and fits us for a Glory that is to come.

Such a Faith intitles us to the Promises of God, and to all the Privileges of the New Covenant; for saith our Apostle, *Being Justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*



A  
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the

K I N G

A T

St. *J A M E S's*,

Wednesday in Passion-Week.

MARCH 20. 169<sup>4</sup>.

---

By the Reverend JOHN WILLIAMS, D.D.  
Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

---

L O N D O N :

Printed for BERNARD LINTOTT at the *Cross-  
Keys* between the Two *Temple-Gates* in  
*Fleetstreet*. 1708.

A  
SERMON

Preach'd before the

KING

AT

St James's

Wednesday in Passion-Week.

MARCH 22. 1697.

By the Reverend John Williams, D.D.  
Chaplain to His Majesty.



Printed for Bernard Lintott at the Cross  
Key between the Two Temple-Gates in  
Fleet-Street. 1708.

## 2 COR. V. 21.

*For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**I**N the 19th verse, we have as it were the Sum of the Gospel, viz. That God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespas unto them, &c.

2. The use to be made of it, that we be therefore reconciled unto God. Now then we are Ambassadors from Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God.

3. The Argument to enforce it, in the Text, *For he hath made him to be Sin*, &c. In which there are two Phrases to be explain'd.

1. *He was made Sin.*

For the Explication of which Phrase we must have recourse to the Old Testa-

H h 2                      ment,



ment, where we may observe that the Sermon Hebrew Word חטאת signifies both *Sin* and a *Sin-offering*, and accordingly the word *Sin* is supplied in our Translation by the Addition of *Offering*. So in *Lev. 4.* it is used eight times; as ver. 3. *If the Priest sin, let him bring for his Sin a young Bullock unto the Lord for a Sin-Offering.* The word *Sin* stands alone in the Hebrew; but our Translation aptly supplies it *Sin-Offering*: And which it gives Notice of by putting the word *Offering* in a different Character or Letter from the word *Sin*. So it is c. 5 and 7. Thus it is to be understood, and should also be rendred, *Hosea 4. 8. They eat up the Sin of my People, the Sin, that is the Sin-Offering.*

So *Ezek. 4. 22, 23. Isai 53. 13.* After this manner is it in the New Testament. So *Rom. 8. 3.* God sending his own Son for *Sin*, condemned *Sin* in the Flesh, for *Sin*, i. e. by a *Sacrifice for Sin*, as it is well rendred in the Margin.

So *Heb. 9. 26.* Christ was once offered to bear the Sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time *without Sin*, that is without a *Sin-offering*.

And

And thus it is to be understood in the Text, he was made *Sin for us*, that is a Sermon Sin-Offering, or a Sacrifice for Sin. III.

*That we might be made the righteousness of God*, that is, that we for Christ's Sake, and upon the terms of the Gospel may be accepted and dealt with by Almighty God, as if we were perfectly righteous.

So is the Phrase used, *Rom. 10. They (the Jews) being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. Ignorant of God's righteousness*, that is of the way by which God justifies and saves Men under the Gospel (which is a way of Grace and Favour) *would establish in the stead of it a Righteousness of their own, of their own choosing, a Justification by the Law of Moses*, (as he farther explains himself, *ver. 59.*) So *Phil. 3. 9.* So that the meaning of the whole is, that God did graciously appoint, and Christ was pleased freely to become a Sacrifice for our Sins, and for our Sakes to be treated as an Offender, when without any Sin of his own, that we though guilty, might be pardoned, accepted and justified upon the Faith and Repentance.

~~~~~ He was thus made Sin for us, &c.  
 Sermon In treating upon which words I shall
 III. shew.

1. What Christ did when he was made Sin for us.

2. What there was in his being made Sin for us, that could be the Reason of making us Righteous: For that is here affirmed, he was made Sin for us, *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

3. How far his being made Sin for us, did conduce to the making us righteous.

4. That his being for that Reason made Sin for us, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him is a very forcible Argument for our being reconciled to God. For after this manner are the words introduced, *ver. 20. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God, for he hath made, &c.*

Before I proceed to the Particulars proposed, let me observe some things that are supposed.

As,

1. That by the Fall, Mankind was in a Condition that wanted Relief, that needed Pardon and Remission.

2. That

2. That Mankind has all along supposed that there needed an Atonement, that Sermon is, somewhat over and above Repentance, III. as it is evident from Sacrifices.

3. That we are not to question whether God could remit Sin without an Atonement upon Repentance only: But to take it for granted, that he will not remit it without an Atonement.

4. That we are therefore to consider upon what Terms we are to have the Benefit of such Atonement, and by which we are taken into Covenant with God. These things premised, I shall return to the Particulars before recited.

As,

1. What Christ did when he was made Sin for us; that is (as I have shew'd) when he was made a *Sin-Offering*, as he is said to be sacrificed *for us*, 1 Cor. 5. 7. And accordingly the Text doth covertly point to the several Qualifications required in an expiatory Sacrifice, or a Sacrifice for Sin, and to which the Sufferings of Christ bear an exact Resemblance; which are such as these.

1. Designation. He hath *made* him to be sin, appointed him so to be; as those Sacrifices under the Law were of God's own immediate Institution. So it's

elsewhere said of our Saviour, *Rom. 3. 25.*
 Sermon that God sent him forth *περὶ τοῦ* predeter-
 III. mined him, to be a Propitiation.

2. Substitution. It was *for us*, and in our stead. And so he is said to be wounded *for our transgressions*, &c. *Isai. 53, 3, &c.* to be a Propitiation for our Sins. *1 Joh. 2. 2.*

3. Purity. He, *Who knew no Sin*, as the Sacrifice under Law, was to be without Spot. *Num. 19. 2.*

So 'tis said of our Saviour, *How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offer'd himself without Spot to God, Heb. 9. 14. 1 Pet. 1. 19. c. 2. 21. c. 3. 18.*

4. There is a farther Emphasis to be put upon the Person, he hath made him to be Sin; which doth denote the vast Difference between the legal Sacrifices, and that of Christ. So the Apostles, *Heb. 9. 13. For if the Blood of Bulls and Goats sanctifieth, &c. How much more shall the Blood of Christ purge, &c. 1 Pet. 1. 1.*

2. General. What was there in Christ's being made Sin for us that could be the Reason of making us righteous?

And that was that God might manifest his Justice and Holiness, his Hatred to Sin, and his Resolution to punish it;
 when

when he would pardon the Offender, and remit the Penalty upon no less valuable a Consideration, than the Blood of his own Son. So Rom. 3. 25. *Whom God hath set forth, to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood, to declare his righteousness for the Remission of his Sins that are past, through the forbearance of God,* ver. 26. Sermon III.

So Rom. 8. 3. God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin (or by a Sacrifice for Sin) condemned Sin in the Flesh.

By this Means, as God hath testified his Mercy on the one hand, by admitting a Sacrifice; so his Justice and Holiness on the other, by requiring it, and that a Sacrifice of inestimable Value. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. *Forasmuch as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things.*

3. General. How far Christ's being made Sin, or a Sin-Offering for us doth conduce to the making us righteous.

There is no doubt but that the Sufferings of our blessed Saviour were so sufficient and perfect, so fully answering their end, and so suitable to the case they respected, that there needed nothing more of that kind to complete them; for *by one Offering hath he perfected for ever them that are sanctified,*

~ sanctified, Heb. 10. 14. So here, ver. 19. **Sermon** *God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself*; that is, there was now nothing wanting on God's part to testify his Reconciliation. But as there are two Parties concerned in the Covenant; the Person reconciling and the Person to be reconciled; the one forgiving and the other to be forgiven. So there is requisite on our part, a certain capacity for Pardon and Reconciliation, as well as a disposition on God's part to pardon; and therefore it follows, ver. 20. *Wherefore be ye reconciled unto God*: Whereas verse 19. did shew how far God had proceeded, when he testified his good Will to Mankind, by appointing and accepting the Atonement; so verse 20. is a limitation upon the former, and shews that there is an expectation of a Reconciliation on our part to complete it, and render us capable of that favour: For it follows, *Now then we are Embassadors from Christ, beseeching you, &c. that ye be reconciled unto God.*

From whence it is evident, that as the vertue of Christ's death did make way for God's being reconciled to us, and that without any derogation to his Authority, Justice and Holiness, he might receive
Sinners

Sinners into his Favour. So it was upon the Condition of our being reconciled to him, that we should be partakers of that favour, and without which reconciliation on our part, neither would Almighty God be actually and fully reconciled to us, nor could we be the Righteousness of God in Christ. And therefore the sufferings of Christ, how valuable and meritorious, how effectual and sufficient soever they were in themselves, yet they were never design'd to weaken God's Authority, to affront his Laws, or derogate from the perfections of his Nature, by reconciling him to such as remain irreconcilable Enemies to him. Sermon III.

Christ is indeed said to be a *propitiation for our Sins*: But as a Propitiation in the nature of it, doth declare God's love to Justice and his hatred to Sin, when he would not pardon it without a compensation, and such a compensation as the Blood of his own Son: So it implies the Favour and Mercy thereby procured, and upon that consideration promis'd to us, is in no other way to be obtained than what is consistent with, and tends to the promoting the same ends: And that God that designed and appointed his beloved Son as a Propitiation, that he might

might with a salvo to his own Honour, Sermon Authority and Law, receive Sinners into
 III. favour, never design'd they should be so received in such a way as would utterly overthrow them. For if he might pardon Sinners, whether penitent or impenitent, and deal with them as righteous, whether they were wicked or righteous, this might have been done as well without a Propitiation as with it; and the shedding of the Blood of Christ, and the whole process of his Humiliation and Sufferings might have been spared. The honour of God's Justice, Authority and Holiness might have stood as safe, where there was no Propitiation as where there was. But if the doing right to these [*viz.* his Justice, Holiness and Authority] was the reason of a Propitiation, and of so valuable a Propitiation as the Blood of the only begotten Son of God, then the case is not alter'd by a Propitiation; and impenitent Sinners can no more be pardoned upon a Propitiation than they could have been pardoned without it. And we may as well expect God should pardon us without any Atonement, as pardon us after an Atonement, when he must quit his Holiness, Justice and Authority for it. So that the Gospel-Terms of Faith,

Faith, Repentance, and new Obedience, are established upon the same reason and necessity as a Propitiation. And we may as well expect God should pardon us without any Propitiation, without any Atonement made on our behalf, as pardon us after that Atonement is made, without obliging us to the performance of the Conditions required in the New Covenant; which would leave us in the same confused State, as if God should pardon us without a Propitiation.

Sermon
III.

Nay, so much the worse would the case have been, as it may bear a Question, Whether God could have pardoned (if he had so pleased) without a Propitiation? *Mic. 7. 18. Matth. 6. 14.* But it is impossible in the nature of the thing, to pardon us without Repentance on our part, and save us without our Conversion to himself.

Nay, so much the worse is it now, that when there was such a valuable consideration as should be a sufficient *propitiation for the sins of the whole World*, such as refuse the Gospel-Terms do declare, that they value their Sins above the Blood of their Saviour, when they chose to adhere and continue in them, after God has stamped such a black
and

and indelible Character upon them, by
Sermon the Sacrifice he appointed and required
III. for their Expiation, as the Blood of his
own Son.

Before therefore any can think to be
pardoned for Christ's sake, without the
Gospel Qualifications of Faith, Repent-
ance and Obedience, they must satisfy
themselves, that Sin is not hateful to
God; that to pardon it without Repent-
ance is no derogation to the Perfections
of his Nature: Nor is the end of Christ's
death defeated, though they are not re-
deemed from *the power of their iniquities*.
But if the contrary to this be true, as
certainly it is, then the impenitent Sin-
ner is in a very dangerous and unsalvable
condition, and notwithstanding so valu-
able and meritorious a Sacrifice as that of
Christ, such a one will be sent away
with those to whom it shall be said at
the last day, *I never knew you, depart
from me ye workers of iniquity*, Mat. 7. 23.
But if on the contrary, there be a true
Faith in Christ, and a Repentance from
dead Works, we are reconciled to God
and God to us; we are one with him,
and he with us.

And forasmuch as Christ was made a
Sin-offering for us, we shall be made the
Righteous-

Righteousness of God in him; then whatever Sins we have before been guilty of, shall for his sake be pardoned; and we shall at last *obtain eternal redemption by him*, Heb. 9. 12. *For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God, by the death of his Son; much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*, Rom. 5. 10. Sermon
III.

To bring this point to a close, let us put the case of a Sinner after this manner. Put the case that the Sinner be impenitent, and continues in that State living and dying, what can he hereafter plead for himself, why, as an obstinate Sinner he should not be proceeded against, and the sentence of Condemnation pass upon him? By what means is he secured or justified? What hath he to plead for himself, when he hath no Pardon, no Promise, no Expiation, no Saviour, to which he can be entitled; having not fulfilled the Conditions, nor complied with the Terms upon which alone those are made over to him. His Mouth must be stop'd, and all his Arguments for Mercy before closed.

But now on the other side: Put the case that the penitent Sinner is impleaded; wherewith shall he come before
the

~ the Lord, who is a God of infinite Pu-
 Sermon rity, and so hates Sin, and of infinite

III. Justice to punish it? Here is the remedy for such, here the Ground of his Comfort, here the Foundation of his Plea and what he is to depend upon; and that in the first place is a valuable Propitiation, the Blood of the Son of God, in vertue of which his Repentance is accepted and his Sins are pardoned.

The Sinner is then no Sinner in the Eye of the Evangelical Law and Constitution of the New Covenant, his Sins are forgiven, his Services and his Person accepted; and when the Sinner is reconciled to God, God is reconciled to him: And since Christ was made a Sin-offering for him, the Sinner is made the Righteousness of God in him.

IV. General. Christ's being made a Sin-offering and a Sacrifice for us, that we might be *made the Righteousness of God*, &c. is a powerful Argument for our being reconciled unto God.

This is a point that has peculiar Considerations to enforce it, taken from the Context. As

1. 'Tis *God reconciling* the Creator stooping to the Creature, to one that doth as well subsist as he was made by his Power.

2. It

2. It was God reconciling the *World*, the whole Race of *Adam*, the perverse Offspring of a degenerate Parent. And that when we were yet *without strength*, while *Sinners* and *Enemies* (as the Apostle carries on the *Climax*, Rom. 5. 6, 8, 10.) *we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son.* III.

3. We are still led on: God was in *Christ* reconciling the World to himself, no meaner a Person than the Son of God, one no less dear to him than his only begotten Son, that was made a Sacrifice for us: When there are *thousand thousands minister to him*, and *ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*, Dan. 7. 10. When there were Cherubin and Seraphim that might have been employed, and were employed in proclaiming these glad Tidings of Reconciliation to the World, yet he sent his Son to accomplish it; He *spared not his own Son*, but *deliver'd him up for us all*, Rom. 8. 12.

4. He made him to be *Sin for us*, that *we might be made the Righteousness of God in him*, and that *we might be received to favour*, and be dealt with as if we never had offended. And is not all this a sufficient, and should it not also prove an effectual Argument for our Reconciliation unto God? *Herein is love*, (saith the Apostle, 1 John 4. 10.) *not that we loved God,*

 but that he loved us, and sent his Son to
 Sermon be the propitiation for our Sins. And he
 III. might well conclude, as he doth verse 19.
We love him, because he first loved us. For
 could there be more done to testify his
 Love to us, than to send his Son, and to
 send him to die for us, and be our pro-
 pitiation? Could there be more done than
 to seek first to be reconciled? Can there
 be more done, than that the Creator
 should thus condescend to the Creature,
 the Offended to the Offender? Were we
 but duly sensible what Sin is, what it
 deserves; what it is that makes, and
 what it is to have Almighty God for our
 Enemy; how solicitous should we be to
 obtain his Favour, and what would we
 not be willing to give for such an expedi-
 ent as might purchase it? How should we
 be apt to say with them in the Prophet,
*Micah 6. 6. Wherewithal shall I come be-
 fore the Lord, and bow my self before the
 most High? will the Lord be pleas'd with
 thousands of Rams and ten thousands of
 Rivers of Oyl? Shall I give my first-born
 for my Transgression, and the fruit of my
 Body for the sin of my soul? &c.*

How readily should we then hearken
 to such a Proposal, how earnestly should
 we sue for it? How chearfully should we
 embrace it when offer'd? This would be
 our

our case if we saw our danger, but had no prospect of a Remedy, and no Revelation of it. And is there not the same reason for our Reconciliation to God when God is reconciled, when there is a Promise and a Revelation, as if there was no Promise, no Proposal, no Revelation? And especially when the danger is still before us, and we may everlastingly perish, not through want of a Reconciliation in God, not through want of a Propitiation valuable and sufficient, but through want of our Reconciliation to him.

And this Argument will still be improved, if we consider how the Son of God was *made Sin for us*, and what he suffered to redeem us from it. The coming of Christ into the World was so infinite a Condescension, and his Life in it such a state of Humiliation, that nothing but the fervent desire he had of doing the greatest good to Mankind could induce him to it. He *had a glory with the Father before the World was*, John 17.5. and so all the Kingdoms of the World and the Glory of them, could be no motive to him to quit those Mansions of Blessedness. What a condescension then was it for him not to have a House where to lay his Head? *Mat. 8. 20.* What to be treated as the worst of Criminals, and to be

Sermon
III.

Sermon
III.

Luke 22.
44.

Heb. 5. 7.
Mat. 26. 39.

loaded with the heaviest reproaches, to be buffeted, scourged, crucified? What was it for him to die, and suffer more than Man could inflict or Man could bear? What a death was that which made him as it drew near, to sweat as it were great drops of Blood; and with strong crying and tears, to beg if it were possible, that Cup might pass from him? What a death was that which Nature trembled at, and that the whole frame of it seem'd to bear a part in? When the Heavens were covered with darkness, the Earth shook, the Rocks rent, the Graves were opened, and many of the bodies of Saints arose? *Mat. 27. 51.* What a death was that which made the Son of God himself to cry out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* *Mat. 27. 46.* Good God! what must that be that drove his Soul into such bitter Agonies, that thus afflicted him under the design of doing the greatest good to Mankind, and a Service most acceptable to the Father? What could thus move him, him I say, in whom the most spotless Innocence, the most fixed Resolution, the most invincible Patience, the most perfect Charity met together? What could thus shake the Powers of his Soul, and thus embitter the Cup which his Father gave him to drink? *John 18. 11.* Could it be death?

death? How could that distress him, that was *the Resurrection and the Life?* Sermon John 11. 25. Could it be the kind of Death, the Pain and the Shame of it? that even others have not only born with Patience, but triumph'd over in his Cause; and he is said to have *endured the Cross and despised the Shame*, Heb. 12. 2. But this it was to be *wounded for our Transgressions, to be bruised for our Iniquities*, Isa. 53. 5. and to be made Sin for us. And is not this a powerful and irresistible Argument for our Reconciliation to God? Did our Sins cost so much, and was it thought necessary by the Father that before they should be expiated, the Son of God should thus do, and thus suffer; that he should drink of such a bitter Cup, that he might *taste death for every Man*, Heb. 2. 9. And was he content to do it for so important a consideration, as the reconciling God to Man? And is it not then as fit, reasonable and necessary, that we should be reconciled to God through him? And can we think slightly of Sin, which God did thus condemn in the Flesh and Sufferings of Christ, and would not forgive under a less expiation than the Blood of his own Son? Can we then think with Reason or Safety to continue in that which he has thus branded as the object
of

of his highest Displeasure? Wilt thou
 Sermon then, Sinner, see what Sin is, how displea-
 III. sing to Almighty God? Follow Christ
 from the Cradle to the Grave, through
 all the Acts of his Abasement and Humi-
 liation; follow him more especially from
Gethsemane to *Calvary*, from the Garden
 to the Cross; behold him sweating,
 striving, crying; behold him betrayed,
 bound, reproached, buffeted, scourged,
 and crucified; behold him in his Agonies,
 and earnestly praying the terrible Cup
 might pass from him; and at last crying
 out *my God, my God, why hast thou for-
 saken me?*

And then see if there was any *Sorrow like
 unto his*, Lam. 1. 12. or any Evil like unto
 Sin, that he thus suffered for. Canst thou,
 Sinner, see all this, thy Saviour, the Son
 of God, thus suffering, and thus distressed,
 and not be deeply concerned and afflicted!
 Hast thou no Trouble, no Compunction
 for his Agonies, no Tears of Repentance
 for his Drops of Blood, no Indignation a-
 gainst Sin, which he by this means
 made Expiation for? And after all wilt
 thou be as blind and infatuated, as inflexible
 and obstinate as the deluded Jew that cru-
 cified him, that ravingly cried out, *His*
 Mat. 27. 25. *Blood be on us and on our Children;* and,
not this Man, but Barabbas.

What

What a Reproach was it to that People, that the Rocks were more yielding than Sermon they, that the Earth trembled, and the Sun hid its Head at what they gloried in; that the Heathens declared him to be *righteous*, whom they accused as a Malefactor; that a Thief believed in him, whom the Scribes and Rulers did reject! III.

And shall we be more unrelenting than they, and by our Infidelity and Disobedience, our Obstinacy, betray to scorn our Saviour and his Religion, and nail them as it were to his Cross. Cease at length, O impenitent Christian, the Prosecution of thy blessed Saviour; triumph not over him in his Sufferings; trample not that sacred Blood under thy Feet, by which if ever thou must be sanctified, and thy Sins forgiven, and thou eternally saved; from this Day begin to love, admire and adore.

At length throw down thy Arms, and declare that thou art conquer'd by a mighty Love; by the Love of God, in thus sending his Son, and by the Love of his Son, in thus dying for thee.

Turn all thy Displeasure and Indignation against thy self, or rather against thy most mortal Enemies, the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and call upon thy Saviour for his Assistance. Dedicate all the Powers of thy Soul to his Service, and

say with our Victorious Apostle elsewhere,
 Sermon God forbid that I should glory, save in the

III. Cross of the Lord Jesus, by whom I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me, Gal. 6. 14. And since we are bought with such an inestimable Price, let us glorify God with our Bodies and Souls which are his, 1 Cor. 6. 20. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the Dead and of the Living, Rom. 14. 9. or as it is here, God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation. Now then we are Ambassadors from Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

To whom with the Father and the Holy-Ghost be all Honour, Glory, Majesty, Power and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

7 NO 68

F I N I S.

